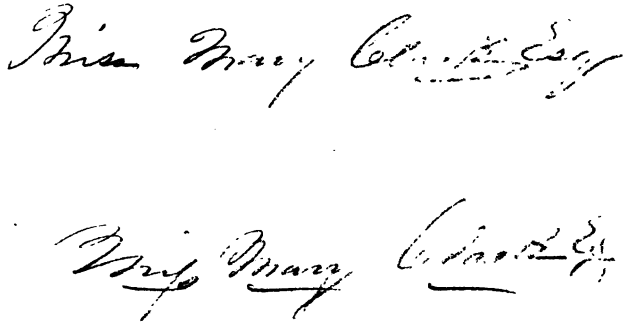

ABEL ALLNUTT.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"HAJJI BABA," "ZOHRAB," &c.

And if I have done well as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.

2 MACCABEES, XV. 38.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It frequently happens that when a hen is sitting, a strange egg is introduced into the nest, and thus a bird of a different species is brought to life with her brood. It is so with this work. My strange egg will be found in the eleventh chapter of the second volume, but only half hatched, because I leave it to others to bring it to maturity. An antiquarian subject, tending to illustrate sacred matters, it may be said, has no business in the pages of a novel; but I venture to answer to that, that its fitness depends upon the mode of introducing it; and I hope it will be found that the mode I have adopted is not wholly objectionable; since it at one and the same time illustrates the character of one of the essential personages of the tale, and tends to the discussion of an interesting question. I had often thought of bringing the subject to notice in some separate form; but, all things considered, I think it just

as likely to be read in this manner as in the paper of a literary journal or some antiquarian miscellany. This hint, however, I hope, will be sufficient to such of my readers as only read for amusement's sake, to warn them of the existence of such a subject; whilst it may, perhaps, induce those grave and learned persons who hold all fiction as trash, to relax their dignity, and admit "ABEL ALLNUTT" to the honour of a place on their table.

When a poor fellow falls overboard and gets adrift, there is an ingenious contrivance on board ships, called a life-preserver, which is launched after him; and if it acts properly, he may probably save his life by clinging to it. When I see "ABEL" launched into the vast ocean of society, one of the *rari nantes* struggling for existence, I cannot help looking to my CHAP. XI. V. 2, as his life-preserver, which may, probably, keep his head above water a little longer than others who are cast adrift at the same time with himself, with nothing but a *puff*, whatever their merit, to keep them from sinking.

THE AUTHOR.

ABEL ALLNUTT.

CHAPTER I.

Some account of the Family of Allnutt.

In a remote part of one of the western counties of England, thickly surrounded by trees, overgrown with ivy, and secluded from the public gaze, was situated an ancient, small red-brick house, that was often compared to the face of an old lady, peeping through the close frills and ribands of her cap, looking snug, neat and cheerful. From a back study, about ten o'clock one fine summer's morning was heard to issue the sounds of a German flute, which, although both door and windows were closed, would find its way to the ears of the inmates, and occasion exclamations of either disapproval or the contrary, according as their nerves might or might not be affected. The individual who played the flute was a short, faded-looking man, about thirty-five years of age, whom we beg leave to introduce to our readers as the Abel Allnutt of our title-page. A peculiar benignity of aspect was the only charm that adorned his person; for his face was pale, his teeth indifferent, his hair scanty, and there was an awkward simplicity in his manner which indicated that he had mixed little with the world. He had been sickly from his youth upward, and it was owing to the great care his sisters had taken of him (for they had lost their parents when he was still of an early age,) that he escaped the unrelenting per-

secutions of consumption. They had combated with all their might his excessive love of the flute, and this had been almost the sole cause of dissension between them during the many years which they had passed together under the same roof.

As he was blowing his way successfully through one of the most difficult of Mozart's solos, suddenly the door of his study opened, and his eldest sister, Aunt Bab, as she was usually called, appeared, holding the door-handle with one hand and resting her arm upon the door-post with the other. She was many years older than her brother, and was a matter-of-fact-looking person, who enjoyed the principal management of the house, and whose decision on all matters which concerned the family generally was conclusive. Her eyes were light, though piercing, her hair inclined to red and now thinly streaked with gray, and in her whole manner and demeanour there was that life and bustle which denoted a notable and intelligent woman,—for, be it said, a lack of comeliness is the parent of many virtues.

"How can you go on in this manner?" she said to her brother with an expression that might have passed for anger and reproof; "it is too bad, when you know that it was but yesterday you had that alarming fit of coughing."

"My dear Barbara," said her brother, in the most placid tone, and without showing a symptom of ill humour, "I will just get through this solo, and then I promise to lay by my flute. I would not have taken it up this morning, but that I dreamed of this difficult passage all the night through, and by shutting my door and windows I thought that I should not have been heard."

"You are mistaken, though," she said: "I will never let you alone so long as you have dealings with that horrid instrument; and when you know that it may be the death of you any day, and leave me and my sister without your protection, it is really too bad—and, what's more, very selfish."

"Well, then, I'll play no more," said Abel, with the greatest good nature; and so saying, he unscrewed his flute, placed it in its case, and shut up his music-book. "There —will that do for you?"

"That's a good man!" said his sister. "But what I wanted to speak to you about was our dinner to-day,—you know this is John's last day, therefore what shall we have? He will be here at five with Mary.

"What shall we have?" said Abel, slowly turning his thoughts from seraphic Mozart to vulgar pudding: "why, what does John like best?" he inquired.

"I think he likes most things," replied his sister, becoming thoughtful at the question. Hence ensued a pause, followed by one of those discussions upon the important subject of dinner so apt to puzzle even the wisest heads, and which, in this instance, ended in that never-failing compromise, that universal point of agreement in English taste, viz. a leg of mutton.

"If that be the case," said Bab, winding up the argument, "let us give him a leg of mutton at once."

"Very well," said Uncle Abel, rubbing his hands as if he had settled a great question; "let us give him a roasted leg of mutton."

"Done!" said his sister; "we'll have it."

"But what does Mary like?" added Abel; "poor Mary must have what she likes—we must not forget that dearest girl."

"Girls of her age," said Aunt Bab, "don't care much what they eat: poor thing, I fear she won't have much appetite, now that she is about to lose her father for such an uncertain length of time. But I will take proper care of her:—she shall not be starved, I promise you—we shall be able to make out a very good dinner, and John will go away happy."

"Poor dear John!" exclaimed Abel; "would that he could always secure so good a dinner! I fear that, considering the life he is about to lead, he will be often obliged to rough it upon much more indifferent food."

Thus much having been settled, Aunt Bab went her way to make the necessary preparations. The reader must be told that the occasion of this dinner teemed with consequences of great import to the family of which I have hitherto afforded but a glimpse; and as it will be impossible for him to proceed without some knowledge of its history, I beg leave to submit the following short account to his notice.

The family of Allnutt, for such was the name, claimed an ancient descent, and had been allied to many noble families. Its actual chief was the Earl of Knutsford, a proud nobleman, who enjoyed great political influence. He was a distant relation to the individuals already mentioned; and it was a received truth, that if certain events should happen, and certain persons should die, the title and estates

would fall to the lot of the family now under consideration. Mr. Allnutt, father to Abel, had been a country gentleman of about two thousand pounds a year; he married a lady of no importance in point of family, but of great excellence of character. They had had a family of four children, two daughters and two sons. Barbara, the eldest, whose name had gradually run through a scale of diminutives until it had stopped at Bab, was some years older than the others. The second child was John, the third Fanny, and the youngest Abel, he being about twenty years younger than his eldest sister. They became orphans when Barbara was about thirty years of age, and consequently the duties of managing the family had devolved upon her—duties to which she was quite equal. Owing to the active and bustling turn of her character, she had secured so great a share of influence that the others submitted almost implicitly to her guidance.

Although the Earl was scarcely aware of the existence of this branch of his family, and if he were, would perhaps not have recognised any of its individuals as belonging to himself, the father, Mr. Allnutt, prided himself much upon his ancestors, whose names he asserted were to be found in Doomsday Book, and never ceased hinting the possibility of one day himself enjoying some of its hereditary dignities. He had lived in a handsome old mansion; and although his fortune was small, yet he could not resist the vanity of making an elder son of John, upon whom he settled his house and estate, leaving to his three other children five hundred pounds per annum between them—that is, one hundred pounds a year to each daughter, and three hundred to Abel.

John at an early age had shown such a turn for science, and as he grew up became so conspicuous for the enterprize and boldness of his character, that his father easily acceded to his wishes of placing him in the army. He entered the engineer service, and in the course of time became a distinguished officer, serving with great credit in the war of the Peninsula, by which he gained as rapid promotion as could be acquired in that branch of the service. At the peace he returned home as Major Allnutt. So long as he was employed by others, with the responsibilities of his profession hanging over him, his conduct was distinguished by prudence and sagacity; but no sooner was he his own master, than he became the plaything of his own schemes, and the ready instrument of every schemer. He

was one of those visionaries who conceive they can stride into affluence by a single step, and by one bright thought gain an eminence which others only attain by years of intense study. His quickness in the field of battle, which had gained for him many a bright laurel, made him conclude that he might be equally successful in the arts of peace, and he rushed with the same ardour upon what he thought was an indisputable invention as he did upon an unguarded point of the enemy's line. He wrote unanswerable pamphlets which were never read, for which he never got more than the warm thanks of those to whom he presented them, backed by the bill of costs of his publisher. He invented a ship that was never to sink, in which he embarked half his fortune, and just escaped with his life as he was exhibiting her capabilities to an astonished crowd of patrons and spectators. He then consoled himself by endeavouring to convert young town thieves into honest yeoman; in which having failed without taking warning of experience, he devised a scheme for rearing salt-water fish in fresh water, hoping to supply the town with cod and turbot to the discomfiture of Billingsgate, and in the success of which he was about exulting, when, as the Armenian said of his horse, he exclaimed, "had they lived but another day, his experiment would have been complete." In these and such like pursuits, at the end of a few years, he found his fortune so considerably diminished, if not entirely dissipated, that he was obliged to turn his views to some more certain mode of acquiring a fortune. It was about this time that England began to run mad upon the subject of the emancipation of the Spanish colonies from the mother country, upon loans to the new republics, and particularly upon mines and mining companies. A universal fever of generous patriotism raged throughout the country in their favour. One of our greatest statesmen had called them into existence. Patriotism begat the rage of lending money, lending money begat a desire of large interest, and with an increase of interest all the world seemed at once to have gained a short cut to unlooked-for affluence. John Allnutt was seized with the raging mania in its worst form. He ran about like one demented; wrote pamphlets full of tables, calculations, and predictions; talked of the flood of wealth which was about to visit the world with the same certainty as a certain class of enthusiasts now announce its end, and rendered himself so conspicuous by the zeal of his extravagant hopes, that one of

the principal Mexico mining companies was too happy to secure him as the director of their concerns.

At the moment of this our history he was expected to arrive at the home of his brother and sisters, accompanied by his daughter, on his road to join the ship that was to take him to Mexico. It must be told that he had married early in life a beautiful young person, who had left him a widower after a few years had elapsed, in the possession of this only child. Mary Allnutt was now about seventeen years of age. Her beauty was so perfect, that it would be difficult to say which feature excited the most admiration. There was great delicacy, accompanied by a brilliant appearance of health; grace shone in all the movements of her person, which was veiled by such retiring modesty, that the awe it produced discouraged impertinent glances; whilst in her lovely face there beamed so much goodness and intelligence, that the moment it was seen the beholder was impelled by a wish to acquire her friendship and approbation. She felt all the value of a father at a time that she was called upon to make a sacrifice of that possession. She loved him with warmth and even enthusiasm, for she also partook of the ardour of his character; and it was only the hope of seeing him restored to her in a short time, which prevented her from insisting upon accompanying him in his present expedition. It was settled that she was to live with her uncle and aunts in the country during his absence; and as she loved them almost with the same devotion that she did her father, she composed her mind into something like philosophical submission at the loss which she was about to sustain.

CHAPTER II.

The character and pursuits of the family are gradually developed by a variety of minute circumstances.

The inmates of Ivycote (for that was the name of their cottage) were almost bursting with impatience for the moment of seeing their brother and niece during the long day on which they were expected. Abel had done little else than walk down the lane which led from the house to the

high road to endeavour to catch the first glimpse of their approach;—the active Barbara, laying aside the usual routine of her occupations, as multifarious as those of a secretary of state, had walked from the kitchen to the dining-parlour, and from the parlour to the kitchen, inspecting, first, the various concoctions which were in progress in the one, and then overlooking the arrangements which were making in the other, and ever and anon exhibiting her head at the house-door, until she became weary with anticipation;—whilst Fanny, whom we have still to present to our readers, remained in a listless state of expectation, seated, with her hands across, in the minute apartment called the drawing-room. Abel and his sisters were usually called uncle and aunts, in compliment to their only niece, whom they worshipped with almost divine honours; and as it was a title of which at least Barbara and Abel were proud, we will occasionally continue so to call them. But Fanny, who was still at an age when an *auntdom* is not quite a desirable appointment, rather endured than approved of that too frequent reminder of the lapse of time. She was loitering on the neutral ground which lies between undisputed youth and more debatable middle age—at least such was her view of her case. In the minds of those who would not allow poetry to usurp the place of matter-of-fact, she was settled down into a *bona fide* old maid; but in her own view of the matter the case was quite different—she adhered to youth with unflinching constancy, and blinked the question of age as the man deeply in debt avoids the sight of his banker's book. In her disposition she was as much a prey to apathy and indolence as her sister was active and stirring. It was only when some new individual in the form of man presented himself that her energies were roused, and straightway the powers of both her mind and body were brought into vigorous action—from being an habitual dawdler she then became an active fidget. Her taciturnity would then give way to much talking, her eyes would be armed with long practised artillery, and all the graces of attitude would be summoned up to aid the *levée en masse* of all her forces. Withal, in the main she was amiably disposed—prone to charity, and always ready to produce pincushions and workbags whenever some mighty neighbour projected a fancy bazaar, accompanied by a ball, for the benefit of the poor.

She was seated at her little work-table netting a purse and quietly waiting the tide of events, when the sharp and

piercing voice of her sister was heard calling to her from the other side of the house.

"Fanny," she cried, "do you know whether John sleeps on feather-bed or mattrass?"

Fanny listlessly turned her ear to the sound and said, "What?"

Again the question was repeated; when Fanny, urging her soft voice to the highest pitch, exclaimed, "I don't know —I never know what any one sleeps upon."

Aunt Bab then thought it right to follow up her question by appearing herself; when a long and anxious discussion took place between the two sisters about John's general habits, his mode and manner of sleep—whether he was chilly or the contrary—whether he required much or little covering, two or more pillows, and whether he was accustomed to something warm when he went to bed. Much uncertainty and doubt existing upon these topics, they called in to their councils an old woman who had been a servant in the family from her childhood, who was better acquainted with John's habits than any one else.

"La! Miss Barbara," exclaimed old Betty, when the question concerning the mattrass and feather-bed was put to her; "I recollect as well as though it were yesterday, that just before Master John went to the wars, he slept in the back attic that's over Miss Mary's room,—she was quite a little thing then,—and once in the middle of the night, she ran in to me in a mortal fright, poor thing! saying, she was sure some monster or great beast must be sleeping over her head, for she heard it growl quite plain; and sure enough, as I'm alive, I went with the dear creature into her room and heard an awful noise sounding through the deal-boards. I was afraid something was wrong with Master John, and so, thinks I, I'll steal up to his room and see what is the matter. I then gently opened the door, and what d'ye think I saw? Why, there was Master John wrapt up in his great military cloak, with his portmantel under his head, fast asleep on the bare boards alongside of his own bed which remained untouched, just as I had made it up in the morning. After that, Miss Barbara, I don't think we need much mind which be uppermost, the mattress or the feather-bed;—Master John would sleep sound on the top of the kitchen dresser—that's what he would."

"What could he be doing that for, Betty?" said Fanny.

"Why, Miss, I taxed him with it the next morning, and

bless his face—I see it now—says he to me, 'Betty, says he, 'I'm now a real soldier, and soldiers must be hardy: it won't do for me to be sleeping on a bed when the bare ground will do as well.' I remember it as though it were yesterday."

"That is so like John!" exclaimed Bab; "he never does a thing like anybody else."

"He was always a strange boy," re-echoed old Betty; "and that's the truth on't."

Not long after this conversation had taken place, when the patience of the whole house was nearly exhausted in expectation, the sound of wheels was heard in the lane, and as they approached the house it was ascertained that the post-chaise was in sight, and soon after it stopped at the door. Abel rushed out to greet his brother, followed by his sisters, backed by Betty and the old man-servant; and by the time the vehicle had come to the end of its career, every living thing within the house was present. John leapt out of the chaise first, and was followed by his daughter. Seldom does one see a family-greeting so full of feeling and affection as that which took place on this occasion. Kissing and embracing, and other palpable demonstrations, are not so frequent in our frigid latitudes as among more southern nations; but with a set of simple and warm-hearted country folks who had scarcely ever stirred from their village, such a show of feeling may be allowed as quite natural, and it actually took place. John Allnutt was a handsome, animated looking man, who although now in the zenith of middle age, had the buoyant spirits of a schoolboy. He kissed and embraced every thing that came in his way, even to old Betty, who, drawing up with a smile on her face, wiped her lips with due gratitude for (to her) so rare a mode of salutation.

The interchange of all the proper inquiries and exclamatory greetings having taken place, the family commenced a short course of comparative anatomy upon each other's persons. Bab found John grown fat, Fanny thought him thin; Abel said Mary had grown tall, Mary asserted that Abel was grown young; John found Bab blooming, and then fell to admiring Fanny's hair; whilst Abel, still keeping his eyes upon his neice, patted her cheek and would have said she was beautiful, but he checked his too enthusiastic admiration, fearing to make her vain. Bab and Fanny then began their scrutiny upon Mary, and criticised every inch of her growth as if they had been cheated out

of it by her absence, and then asked John what he thought of her. The affectionate father, casting his parental eyes on the charms of his daughter, whilst tears sprung into their channels, said with an overflowing heart, "She is a dear good girl, that's what I think of her," and then kissed her cheek and forehead with all the rapture of a kind and endearing nature. During this scene in which the family were settling their different disks, old Betty stood at a distance with her apron in one hand and the other uplifted, looking, and smirking, and exclaiming, "Well, who would have thought it!" and "dear me!" and "well-a-day!" when being kindly noticed both by John and his daughter, she departed to evaporate her wonderments and ejaculations to her companions in the kitchen.

When the palpitations of first meeting had somewhat subsided, Aunt Bab would have hurried her brother and his daughter to their rooms, to throw off the dust of the road, so anxious was she to exhibit to them the preparations she had made for their comfort; but John was so full of his schemes, that he could not be prevented from a fit of explosion. Little heeding the seclusion in which his sisters and brother lived, and their consequent ignorance of what was doing in either the political or commercial world, he exclaimed with exultation in his accent,

"Well, Abel, have you heard the news? Capital news to be sure!"

"What news?" exclaimed Abel, Bab, and Fanny with one voice.

"Famous news! I can tell you," said John.

"Oh, such news!" re-echoed the gentle Mary in a subdued voice.

"What is it, pray?" said the others.

"Why, they have positively found silver in the Coffer," said John with great satisfaction in his manner.

"Have they?" said Abel—"Have they?" said Bab—"Have they?" said Fanny, all in the various tones of persons who are puzzled.

"They have indeed," said John, little minding the ignorance of his auditors; "and what's more, we are to have it."

"Shall we indeed!" exclaimed Bab, as if she now understood perfectly what was meant. "Well, that will be nice!"

"This news of the silver luckily just reached before

I left London," said John, "and the directors are full of it."

"Why, I thought we were to have it," said Bab.

"Have what?" said John.

"The silver, to be sure," said Bab. "Did not you think so, Abel?" said she turning to him.

"To say the truth," said Abel, "I know not what to think. John says that silver has been found in the coffer, and that we are to have it; but which coffer he means, he has still to tell us."

"Papa, you said nothing about Perote, that's true," said Mary, smiling, and amazingly amused at the mistake in which her uncle and aunts had fallen: "'tis the Coffer of Perote that papa means."

"Who may Perote be," inquired Aunt Fanny with animation: "Is he any thing to us?"

"No, no, my dear," said John, with a good-natured smile, as if he was recovering from a dream; "you have mistaken me, or perhaps you don't know. Perote is not a man—it's a mountain—it is a high mountain standing conspicuous in the chain which skirts the Mexican coast, and is distinguished by a large square rock on its very summit, which the Spaniards have assimilated to a trunk or coffer, and thus have assigned this name to it. The mining company have heard that a mine has been discovered close at hand, of which they have acquired possession; and as it is situated in a healthy climate, and much nearer to the sea than the one to which I was about originally to proceed, this circumstance became to me a matter of joy and congratulation."

"And much greater to me," said the gentle Mary, taking her father's hand; "for then you will be so much nearer us, and we shall so easily hear from you."

"Oh, is that all?" said Abel, Bab, and Fanny.

"But, John," said Bab with great earnestness, "you have never told us to this day what you are going to do at this Mexico you talk so much about. All the people here say that engineer officers know more about mines than any body else, and that when a mine is to be blown up they do it. But then, I say, if you blow up the mine, what becomes of the silver and gold inside?"

"It's very true," said John, "it's very true that the business of an engineer comprises the knowledge of mining; but that applies to fortifications and walled cities—he there undermines and there blows up. But the mining I am to

undertake is a totally different thing—I am to dig into the bowels of the earth for the precious metals, and get as much silver and gold as I can out of them."

"Oh," said Bab in a lengthened note, "now I understand. It is time for you to be making money, after having lost so much. Will it be long before you get some?"

"The time is uncertain, but the result is certain," said John with great confidence. "What has been done before will be done again. Why, Bab," said he, taking both her hands into his, and looking at her straight in the face, "do you know that in 1825, Guadalajara coined 676,073 pesos; Durango, 800,000; Zacatecas, 3,000,000. In 1810, Guanajato produced 500,000 marcs of silver, and 1500 marcs of gold; Veta Grande, 100,000; and Catorce, 600,000 pesos. —There—what do you say to that? and that with malacaties only, and without the aid of a single steam-engine!"

Bab, confounded by such a descent of hard names and round numbers upon her rustic mind, could scarcely breathe from astonishment, and drawing up a long "Indeed!" from her inmost throat, stood staring, uncertain at the meaning of this display of knowledge.

"Are all those gentlemen with long names, coiners?" inquired Fanny.

"No—they are the places where the ore is found," said John; "and I flatter myself that when I get up our steam-engine with my improvements, I shall raise double the quantity."

"Well," said Bab, "whatever it may be, I shall be quite satisfied even with what it was before."

"And what may a malacati be?" inquired Abel.

"Oh," said Mary, who seemed to be well informed upon every subject which interested her father, "a malacati is a large leathern bag which descends to the bottom of the mine, and being filled, is drawn up to the surface by means of a large wheel worked by horses,—is it not so, papa?"

"Why, you would be as fit to be a director of a mining company as I am," said her father: "I think I must take you with me to help me."

"Do, do, my dear papa!" exclaimed Mary with joy and animation shining in her expressive features; "let me go with you,—I would give worlds to go with you!"

Upon these words her uncle Abel and her aunts assumed the most serious gravity of aspect, and the first addressing his brother, said, "John, you really are not serious in saying this—are you?"

"John," argued Bab, "would you really sacrifice your daughter to the fury of naked savages, and let her live in the woods upon roots and hips and haws, without a rag to her back, only because she is conversant with the name of an outlandish bag?"

"No, no," said John,—"no, my dears, you utterly mistake me—I am only joking; I would not allow Mary to run any risk whatever, were I to become as rich as the Conde de Regla himself. She shall stay quietly with you until my return: there is only one agreement which I wish to make, and which you must all swear to; which is, that she shall not marry, except it be upon most unexceptionable grounds, until my return. She has promised me as much, and I require the same at your hands."

"Marry, indeed!" exclaimed Fanny; "and who is to marry her, I should like to know? There is not a creature within fifty miles of us likely to marry her."

"Who knows?" said John; "husbands, they say, come down the chimney."

"I am sure none has ever come down our chimney," said Fanny with a doleful significancy in her accent and manner.

"Well, John, we promise," said Aunt Bab, "we will watch over your treasure with the same care that you would if you were here yourself."

"Yes," said Abel, "trust to me; and what's more, trust to her," patting his niece's cheek at the same time: "she will never deceive any one, that I will willingly take my oath of."

With these words they dispersed, only to return to dinner, of which they stood much in need.

CHAPTER III.

Showing the excellence of that saying, "Let well alone."

THE little oak parlour was snug; the sun gleamed across the landscape, and the table, with its clean white cloth and glittering accompaniments, spoke volumes for the perfection of Aunt Bab's housewifery. John came in rubbing his hands rejoicing, accompanied by his blooming daughter,

whose young blood flowed briskly through her veins as she contemplated the comforts before her, and looked on the kind faces by whom she was surrounded. Old Betty, with clean cap and apron brought in the dinner; whilst the old man-servant, honest Brown, as he was called, who acted as butler, valet, groom, and gardener, waited at table. When they were all seated, and Aunt Bab's fidgets had somewhat abated, after her anxious countenance had duly conned the array and circumstance of every dish, and when the first calls of hunger were allayed, the ardent John merrily pouring himself out a glass of wine, exclaimed, looking round him at the same time, "My dears, here is health and prosperity to us all! And now I will tell you of a glorious scheme which I have in my head for you, which will at one blow make you richer at least one-third than you are at present."

Aunt Bab, who had been intent upon carving the leg of mutton, was the first to exclaim, "John, what do you mean? How can you manage that?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Mary, looking very arch, "I know how —don't I, papa?"

"You'll be a conjuror indeed," said Abel, "if you can do that."

"Now hearken," said John; "the thing is as easily done as transferring ourselves from this parlour to the next room. You have been hitherto satisfied with drawing a small revenue from your three per cents.—now you shall enjoy six per cent. at once, with much better security for your money."

"Well, I declare!" said Bab, opening her eyes, and smiling with delight as she eyed John, in whom she had always placed implicit confidence—"well, that will be a capital hit! I can scarcely believe it notwithstanding, although I am sure you would never deceive us, John."

"Deceive you!" said John, very gravely. "The thing is as clear as noonday. Nobody thinks now-a-days of drudging on with the small interest derived from the public funds. In this remote corner of the country you can know nothing of what is going on in the world. Here have continents been opening, new governments forming, new sources of trade expanding, the energies of man developed, fresh life and vigour infused into the whole scheme of our existence; and here you are sitting quiet and unconscious in your cottage, without a single thought beyond the inte-

rests of the neighbouring village, as if you belonged in another planet?"

"Well, who would have thought it!" exclaimed Aunt Barbara; and turning to Abel, she said, "Abel, did you ever hear of all this? Here has all this been going on, and we know as little of it as the babes unborn!"

"How can we know what is going on," said Abel, drily, "when we never move from this place? Well, John, tell us your scheme."

"My scheme is this," said John. "You must send an order to your bankers in London to sell your stock out of the Three per Cents. and to buy in Mexican stock. By that single operation you will, I dare say, get at least another two huudred a-year to yourselves."

"Shall we, indeed!" said Bab, laying down her knife and fork. "Let us do it, Abel, at once."

"Abel," said Fanny, "let us do it to-morrow."

"I am ready to do what you like," said Abel; "but——"

"There is no *but* in the case," said Bab; "John says it, and therefore it must be right. What possible objection can you have?"

"You can have none," said Fanny, whose imagination had now fully seized all the advantages likely to accrue from this increase of revenue. "But how shall we get at the bankers?—they are generally agreeable men, and sometimes handsome."

"That is easily done," said John. Then turning to Abel, he said, "Pray let me hear your objection, Abel, if you have any. There is nothing like a free discussion, particularly in money matters;—one ought to have no delicacy there."

"Why, you know best, John," said Abel, very modestly, "and therefore what I might say is perhaps pure folly; but it struck me, that it might be better to remain contented with a smaller interest and the security of one's own government, than with larger interest and the uncertain security of a foreign state."

"There is wisdom in what you say," answered John; "but recollect how very differently Mexico is situated to other states. What greater security can you possibly require than a whole continent full of silver and gold?" (At these words Bab and Fanny looked triumphantly at Abel.) "The very stones of the country are silver—most of the precious metals which now exist in the world have been produced from her mines—and she is about again to pour

forth her treasures. After that, would you refuse to trust your funds in her possession? Believe me, that the riches of the whole Bank of England together are not to be compared to one of her mines. Why, the new mines of Tlalpuhahua alone will give you more security than a whole regiment of bank-directors."

"There—what can you say to that!" exclaimed Bab. "No, Abel, you have no chance in argument with John. No—we are resolved—we will do what you tell us, John—that is determined; but I want you to explain one thing to me, which I have never yet understood. You tell us to sell out of the stocks—now, what are the stocks?"

"Why, as to that," said John, "I might talk and explain to you till to-morrow, and you would perhaps never understand. Generally, then, I may say, they imply government securities for money lent to the state, for which the owner gets a rate of interest graduated by circumstances."

"I always thought," said Fanny, "that they were something like our village stocks:—if you got your money into them, like the poor man's leg, it was difficult to get it out."

Then, turning to John, Bab said, "Now you must put us in the way of accomplishing this job. You are going away to-morrow, and therefore cannot do it for us—you must leave us directions what we are to do."

"There is nothing so easy," said John, "and nothing which you cannot do as well as I; but, in order to prevent all difficulties, I would recommend you to have recourse to your neighbour Woodby. He made all his fortune in the Stock Exchange, and he will tell you precisely what must be done."

Upon this there ensued a pause in their deliberations. To put oneself under an obligation to a neighbour in the country is matter of deep consideration; and Aunt Bab, whose opinion was always consulted in family discussions of this class, remained silent, as if her mind was held in a state of doubt.

"The Goold Woodbys, you mean," she slowly said to John, "of Belvedere Hall? Do you think that would be advisable?"

"And why not?" said John. "He was a stock-broker himself, and surely he will be too happy to give advice upon what he knows best."

"Ah, that is just what he does not like to do," answered Bab; "does he, Abel?"

Abel answered, "Why, as to that, I have never found him otherwise than very friendly and civil to me, and ready to talk upon all subjects. He is fond, 'tis true, of referring to his ancestors, and to those of his wife, the Goolds; and therefore, perhaps, it is too readily inferred that he might wish to drop the broker while he asserts his ancient lineage. But that is only village gossip: I dare say, upon an occasion of necessity, he will not refuse to give his opinion on a point in which he is evidently so great an authority."

"What do you think of it, Fanny?" said Barbara to her sister. "You know Mrs. Goold Woodby and her daughters better than I do;—don't you imagine they would think it odd our going to consult them upon family matters?"

"Why, perhaps they might," said Fanny; "they have a trick of thinking every thing odd: but, as we are to be the winners, what can it signify?"

"It will signify thus much," rejoined the sapient Bab,—"that our private affairs will become the public talk of the whole parish; and then, if our means of living are increased, as John assures us they will be, the Woodbys will be sure to take the whole credit of it to themselves."

"My dear Bab," said John jestingly, "one would suppose that you were about to appoint Mr. Woodby your father confessor, and to divulge to him every secret of your mind. Allow Abel to be your negotiator: men understand these matters better than women, and they are settled in a few words. Go into any of the great marts of business, and you will see hundreds of thousands of pounds transferred from one pocket into another with little more than a word on each side and a nod. Two women will expend more words in a country market-place upon buying and selling a cabbage, than are expended by two of the other sex in settling the disposal of whole fortunes."

Barbara had but a small opinion of Abel's abilities in any thing that related to a bargain, and she consequently shook her head at John's proposal; but, as she was quite alive to the charms of an increase of revenue, she gradually ceased all further opposition, and it was at length settled that Abel should proceed the next day to Belvedere Hall.

The remainder of the evening was occupied in listening to John's schemes for the future; which, if they were here given with the animation and circumstantiality with which

he detailed them, would afford a lively picture of his character,—that is, of a genuine sanguine man. Like all men of that character, his imagination would get the better of his sober reason; and as when a high wind acquires possession of a weather-cock it veers about at its pleasure, so his mind was the play of every scheme, however impracticable. No circumnavigator had ever planned so vast a scheme as that which he now described. His intention, after having reached his destination and set on foot the objects of his mission, was to explore every mine in the Mexican continent; settle the quantity and quality of its minerals; trace its geological construction; survey the country from shore to shore, in order to construct a correct map, and thus refute Humboldt; make collections of natural history; transmit all its principal vegetable productions to England; write a code of laws for the future regulation of its republic; establish a navy; model its army; and, in short, renovate and reconstruct its whole being, moral and physical. He had thoughts of performing the same service to all the new states of the South American continent; he hinted at the possibility of making the name of Allnutt as famous as that of Americus Vespusius: and then, having settled to his satisfaction that portion of the globe, he had thoughts of crossing the Pacific, and keeping up a running fire of renovation and regeneration among the different islands of its archipelago; thus to circumnavigate the globe, and, so he expressed himself, surround it with a zone of civilization of his own making.

His auditors listened with open mouths and uplifted brows at the immensity of his intentions: they, who never having stirred from the confines of their village, looked upon an excursion to the market-town as a feat of uncommon enterprise. Contented and happy in themselves, without ambition for the future, they would have continued to live on as they had hitherto done, had they not been roused by their brother's energies to increase their means of existence. Another incentive was the presence of their niece, whose advancement and settlement in life they felt themselves called upon to promote. 'Tis true that her father's request that no steps should be taken during his absence to promote her marriage stood in their way: but hers was now the age for gaiety; their pride at possessing so beautiful and matchless a niece could not be restrained, and they longed to achieve an innocent triumph over their

neighbours, by infusing love and admiration—and perhaps, let it be said, envy—into their breasts.

"But, my dear John," said Barbara after a pause, "how are you to mind the business you are going upon, and to make your fortune at the same time, if you are to do all these things?"

"And how will you be able to return to me," remarked Mary in her most affectionate manner, "if you are to go so far as you now propose?"

John contended that much more was to be performed in a short space of time in travelling abroad than could be conceived by those who remained inactive at home. Owing to the great improvements in the science of navigation, men crossed and re-crossed the globe with much more certainty than they did formerly; and he asserted that he was ready to lay a good bet, in the same manner as he would stake his money on a steeple-chase, that he would go quite round the globe in a year, taking every continent which came in his way, without turning to the right or left to avoid it. He continued to talk with so much indifference of the long voyage which lay before him, and made it so much a matter of course that he would return at the prescribed period, that he materially blunted the edge of those feelings of sorrow which would otherwise have been excited by his departure; and he so well succeeded in making every one pleased with their own immediate prospects, as well as participating in his own views, that they parted for the night with none of that misery which usually precedes the taking leave of one who is much beloved.

CHAPTER IV.

An introduction to an important personage, both in his own estimation, as well as in this history.

EARLY the following morning every body was astir to witness the departure of the active and indefatigable John. During his hasty breakfast he did not cease reverting to the thousand schemes which engrossed his mind, and particularly to the one touching the immediate increase of the family revenue. His lovely daughter could not speak from

emotion, but sat looking fondly at him until the moment when he arose to depart, when with her last embrace she entreated him to return to her as soon as he could be released from his present engagements. Embracing his sisters, he made promises of writing by every opportunity; and his last words to Abel, as he warmly shook his hand, were "Consult Woodby, and lose no time." Upon that, springing into his chaise, he drove off at a rapid pace, taking the road to Liverpool, where he was to embark for Mexico.

During John's short visit, Barbara had placed the reins of government in his hands, and she yielded to whatever laws he chose to proclaim without the smallest reluctance, for his word was to her a command; but the moment he was gone she again reigned supreme, and her power was duly acknowledged. Fanny became almost an automaton, and only seemed to expand into life when the interests of mankind were brought into discussion. Mary, by her lively and docile disposition, diffused life and pleasure wherever she appeared; whilst Abel, in whom the total abnegation of self, with a reserve, let it be said, of occasional restiveness in favour of his flute, made him always ready to meet the wishes of every one who chose to command him.

When the sound of the wheel was fairly out of hearing, and the house restored to its usual repose, Barbara continued the subject which John had so much insisted upon. Addressing herself particularly to Abel, she said, "We know more about the Goold Woodbys than poor dear John could possibly know,—it stands to reason that we do; and therefore we ought to ask their advice with caution. I am sure I'm right."

Whenever Abel heard these formules of words "It stands to reason," and "I'm sure I'm right," with which Aunt Bab generally set forth her opinion, he always withdrew from further discussion, and generally submitted without a reply.

"I think so to," said Abel.

"Well then, since that is the case," continued Bab, "you must go to him to-day as if you were merely making a morning visit. I think I know Mr. Woodby well, and his habits of life. He will probably say something about the weather,—which is a subject he can say a great deal upon; when you will have an opportunity of asking how his crops are getting on,—which is another subject he likes;

and when you have got him well into that, you may pop upon him all at once with 'What do you think of the French Revolution? He will be charmed when he hears that question, and he will go on for an hour about it: and when he comes to the part where he says, 'I don't know what will become of us, and things never were in a worse state,' you may then ask him the price of stocks, and how things look in the City; when he will tell you all that we want to know. It stands to reason that you must go round and round him cleverly until you bring him to the point, and not frighten him by any one positive question. I 'm sure I 'm right."

"I'll go then at once," answered Abel: "John said 'lose no time.'"

"Do—you had bettter," rejoined Barbara, still full of her diplomacy. "But mind now—weather first—crops next —French Revolution after that, and then the price of stocks;—he 'll tell you all by that means as easily as I can bring all the poultry about me by sprinkling a little corn here and there with judgment. Now mind; let him have his talk out,—he'll then tell you all. It stands to reason— I 'm sure I 'm right."

Abel, docile to her bidding, did as he was ordered, and taking up his hat and stick, walked away intent upon this great scheme; and before he reaches his destination, a walk of about two miles, it will be proper to inform our readers of matters relating to the house and its inhabitants towards which he was bending his steps.

Mr. Goold Woodby, as John had correctly stated, had amassed a very considerable fortune in the city, principally by dealings in the Stock Exchange. At the time of this our history, he had retired into the country, where he had bought a large estate; and not being known in the neighbourhood, dropped the habits of a citizen, and took upon him the airs of a country gentleman. During his mercantile life he had been known by the name of Wouldbe; but when he retired from trade, suddenly he discovered that, during the civil wars, a cavalier of that name had attained great notoriety by an act of treachery; and being anxious to make it known that that person was in fact his ancestor and related to the first families, upon pretext of disclaiming the odium attached to the name, he expended a large sum at the Herald's College, in order to change it to his present more rural appellation of Woodby. By this ingenious mode of applying the *lucus à non lucendo*, he taught the

world what no one would ever have cared to find out—that he was a man of old family,—a fact to which he was always happy to allude. Acting upon the same principle, he married a lady of the name of Goold, possessing riches, with sufficient personal attractions, who also founded much of her happiness upon the pride of birth; for she clearly and truly was able to demonstrate that she was a lineal descendant of Sir Jugg Goold, Knight, the well-known goldsmith to Charles the Second. With the junction of these names he flattered himself to have composed a very euphonical cognomen; and having tumefied himself and his possessions by all the pomp and circumstance of two shields, and as great a variety of heraldic insignia as he could obtain for his money, he gradually persuaded himself that he was a very considerable personage.

He built himself a house, or rather a castle. The utmost ingenuity had been displayed in making its outward appearance as little like a living house as possible. The windows were generally so placed, that when the sun shone, they caught the shadow of a projecting buttress instead of its cheering warmth. Gutters poured forth their contents from frowning embrasures; whilst small turrets, with loop-holes, protruding through dense masses of brick and mortar, like hats on pegs, were hung about the flat walls. The chimneys, which, when seen, give an appearance of snugness and hospitality to an unpretending house, here were hidden behind cunning angles of fortification, and as they disgorged their smoke, made one suppose the building was on fire, since the proper effect was not seen to proceed from the appropriate cause. A perfect flat and even range of country had been selected, upon which to raise this structure; but it had been called Belvedere, (or, as it was usually pronounced by the inhabitants, *Belvideer*,) from the circumstance of a small break in the dense woods which surrounded it, and which enabled the curious in fine prospects to discern a barn, the village steeple, and two haystacks peeping through the trees.

The grounds and shrubberies were laid out with the same taste which had presided over the house. Straight lines were forbidden; every thing was serpentine. The whole plan appeared to have been made with a view of placing every part of them as much at variance with common sense as possible. A walk across a flat lawn was tortured into the same figure as it might be through a wood, and made a straightforward man feel as if his hip would be

put out of joint in winding through it. Chairs and benches, composed of the most tortuous and the roughest of wood, apparently contrivances for the afflicted with distorted spines, were plentifully distributed about the grounds by way of ornament; and every where it seemed as if art had done its utmost to caricature nature.

Abel walked forward with alacrity to perform his appointed task, although he had certain misgivings as to the ultimate result of the change he was about to effect. We wish to bring the reader better acquainted with his character, for he is destined to perform one of the principal parts in the forthcoming narrative. We have already said that, owing to the sickly nature of his constitution, he had been nursed through his boyhood and youth at home. He had been but indifferently educated, for application of any sort had been interdicted; therefore in that respect he was extremely deficient. But what he wanted in mental acquirement and personal advantages was fully balanced by the excellence of his disposition. He might be said to possess, without cant or exaggeration, all those virtues which are called Christian, and which when brought into action, contitute a good and consequently a great character. His distinguishing qualities were meekness and humility: he thought so little of himself, that he was always happy to see others preferred before him. Benevolence was conspicuous in his countenance, manners, and actions; and however small the interest might be which his first appearance inspired, nobody could converse with him without afterwards feeling kindly disposed towards him. All his inclinations and desires were on the side of virtue. He was severe towards himself, but forgiving towards others. Wherever a charitable action was to be performed, a wrong to be redressed, or forbearance to be exercised, he was the first to take the lead, and ever the first to give way if others required him to retire. Such a character, in the bustle of life, was likely to be passed over, often laughed at, sneered at, and made a butt of: it required to be well known to be appreciated.

Upon approaching the place of his destination he found masons at work upon a magnificent entrance composed of two stone lodges, castellated and turreted, and connected by a long range of iron railing, curiously wrought, opening at intervals by two gates, each surmounted by a shield accompanied by a motto.

Abel cast his eyes up at these emblems of vanity, and,

smiled at the pretensions which they announced. He crept up towards the principle entrance of the castle almost with the same timidity that a shy man encounters a whole roomful of company, and rang the bell. He was received by a servant in that sort of dress which announces unreadiness to receive visitors, seeing it was still early in the day, but was duly ushered into the presence of his master.

Mr. Goold Woodby's person did not second the claims which he had set up either to ancient birth or gentleness of blood. He was among men what a cabbage may be among plants. He was altogether a rotund man: his head was as round as a cannon-ball, his body protuberant and spherical, and his legs adorned by calves so round and muscular, that they might have performed the duty of balusters. There was much vulgarity in his whole appearance; although he had an intelligent look, and wielded an eye that ways alive to every thing but the extreme ridicule of his own person. His dress was that of a substantially wealthy man, —he adhered to the old-fashioned row of buttons at the knees, and strong drab gaiters beneath, showing a wholesome azure woollen stocking in the interstice. A long, massive gold chain, with a bunch of embossed seals, hung down from that slope in his person where the fob is situated, and dropped a perpendicular a great deal more conspicuous than does a cable pending from the bows of a Dutch galliot. His hair was slightly sprinkled with powder, and his shirt owned a frill that flowed over his waistcoat. His manners betrayed a singular mixture of vulgar intimacy and cold reserve. When he thought he was too conciliatory, all at once he would stop short, as if he had forgotten something, and become almost rude. His shake of the hand, that indication of man's feelings, was truly characteristic: he gave his hand, but shook his elbow; which was as much as to say, "I leave you to decide between my hand and my elbow how matters stand between us." He was apt to be ceremonious to his inferiors, but would expand into affected ease and jollity with people of consequence, particularly if some equal or inferior was at hand to see him. To any one who had affinity to persons of rank he was invariably attentive, and would always, by hook or by crook, particularly when others were present, allude to that affinity. He was therefore the professed friend of the Allnutt family; although, out of consideration to their poverty, there was always a tincture of protection in his manner towards them. With Abel he adopted the

jocular patronising manner; and when on this occasion his name was announced, he immediately placed himself in a corresponding attitude, and when he approached him, gave him one hand, and placed the other on his shoulder, whilst he exclaimed, "Ah, Allnutt, how are you?" What passed between them will be read in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER V.

The consequences of the foregoing introduction described.

Although Abel was ever ready to hearken to his sister's directions, yet it did not follow that he always obeyed them; for he felt that conviction which we believe is inherent in the male sex, whatever may be the weakness of a man's person, his mind must ever maintain the superiority over that of the woman. On this occasion he had almost entirely forgotten the instructions with which he had been furnished on departing for his embassy; and when he came into contact with his negotiating party, he determined to allow the conversation to take whatever course it might please. However, he did not long remain in suspense how to act; for Mr. Woodby had no sooner delivered himself of his first ejaculation, than he went on as follows.

"It is very good of you to come. I suppose now you came to see my new lodges, which all the world comes to see. Now an't they handsome? I flatter myself they will be as fine an ornament to the county as any thing in it. You remarked the double shields, I hope?"

"Yes, indeed I did," said Abel,

'Ah, well, that's right of you! You see we don't do things in the common way; it's done in the most expensive manner, and Stone, the architect; tells me they beat Lord Thorofield's lodges hollow."

"They are certainly very conspicuous," said Abel.

"I meant them to be conspicuous," rejoined Woodby. I think it quite right, in these times, that people should show themselves properly: it is necessary that those who have weight should assert it by their acts. Now good lodges, I maintain, does that."

"Yes," said Abel; "their architecture is solid, to be sure."

"Certainly it is; and so it ought to be in these times. But did you remark the shields? I am sure you could not have overlooked my shields. I think they show capitally; Lord Thorofield has only a crest."

"Yes, I remarked the shields," said Abel.

"Well, what did you think of them?" continued Woodby, not waiting for the answer. "You know the history of the Woodby arms, don't you? did I never tell it you before? (he had done so a hundred times.) Why, it is just this:—You know the Wouldbes are one of the most ancient families in the kingdom; and I am told that the bull's head *regardant* over the frog *gonflent*, for so they call it in heraldry, is intended to record the ambition of the first baron of the family—who, in his arroganee, aspired to no less a thing than the crown,—and that the motto '**Je voudrai ci je voudrai,**' in old French,—in what they call Norman-French,—means, '*I would be, if I could be.*' Is it not strange? You see I have thought it right to adopt the old arms; although I never could think for a moment in these times to preserve a name so degraded by its want of loyalty to its sovereign as was that of my ancestor, and, therefore, as a matter of duty—as an open declaration of my principles—I thought it right to change it, and to adopt the one I now bear. Now don't you think I am right?" said he, closing upon Abel, and taking one of his buttons in hand,—"don't you think it was handsome of me? It cost me no less than three hundred pounds at the Heralds' College. Who is the man, now-a-days, I should like to know, who would voluntarily come forward and expend three hundred pounds upon loyalty?"

"None but yourself," said Abel, smiling, "that's certain!"

"That's right!" said Woodby, taking the words as a compliment; "but you see I did it though: and I've reason to think it has been well taken at court. The king granted the patent as soon as it was asked for, and, I assure you, it was done in a very handsome manner; and when I kissed hands upon the occasion, his majesty, with the utmost condescension, said, 'How do you do, Mr. Woodbine?' I ventured to put him right, and said, 'Woodby, your majesty,' upon which he smiled, and so did all the surrounding princes and lords, and I never was so

pleased in all the whole course of my life. Is not that charming!"

"Very!" said Abel.

"But you remarked the other shield too, did you not?" said the vain man, who was now completety run away with by his subject. "Well, that, you know, contains the Goold coat of arms; that's the shield of Mrs. Goold Woodby's family. The story attached to that is one of the most interesting, and, I may say, peculiar, in the whole history of England. It has appeared in the 'Anecdotes of celebrated Goldsmiths.' You see, Goold was goldsmith to King Charles II: he is well known to have worked for that monarch's unfortunate father, for it is so attested by records in the family, fac-similes of the bills sent in being in existence to this day, and therefore at the Restoration he was appointed by royal sign manual the court-goldsmith. He was a remarkably shy man, sober in his habits, dressing invariably in a suit of unpretending drab, and keeping clear of all the license of those days. Well, the king one day, in a merry mood, determined to knight him, and straightway he was dubbed Sir Jugg Goold.—But the story of the shield is to come. You know, in those days, all shops were designated by signs, which hung out conspicuously upon handsomely ornamented iron posts. Well, in addition to the knighthood, the king ordered that a coat of arms should be added, which should consist of a hand wielding a hammer, and that the motto, out of compliment to the excellence of the man, should be '**Aurum quam bonum**,' which, you know, means in Latin, '*Gold how good!*' which, I may say, is a sort of *double entendre*, as we say in French, or a pun, as some pretend it is,—for Charles was fond of a joke,—which means both things—that the metal gold is good, and that the man Goold was good also! Now, is not that a curious historical coincidence or fact? Well, this was done. A handsome sign, containing the coat of arms and the motto, was forthwith executed with great skill by a painter of that time, and hung over the door of the shop until the fashion of signs went out. That sign—the original sign—I have now in my possession, having come to me through my wife. You'll own that's a thing to be proud of?"

"It is, indeed," said Abel.

"Therefore, I think, in these times," continued Woodby, "every man of ancient family ought to take particular care to exhibit the titles to his descent, and thus uphold what it

is now-a-days the fashion to despise,—to destroy those fatal levelling principles which were first introduced into this country by that ever-to-be-lamented French Revolution."

At these words Abel recollected the injunctions of his sister, and hoped the moment was now at hand when he might introduce the object of his visit with its proper effect. "That was a sad event, that's most certain!" said he.

"Indeed, I can speak feelingly," said Woodby, "for I was as near being one of the victims of its fury as ever man was."

"How was that?" said Abel.

"What! did you never hear that?" exclaimed Woodby, as if he had just found a fresh point of departure. I was as near done for as you can imagine. I was young at the time; I went to Paris on business. You ought to have seen what the Revolution was to have any idea of it! Why, what do you think they took me for?"

"I really don't know," said Abel.

"Why, they took me for a gentleman," said Woodby.

"Did they indeed!" said Abel.

"Yes," said Woodby, "as sure as you stand there they took me for a gentleman, because I only blew my nose with a white pocket-handkerchief, when I ought to have done it with a tricolor one. They were as nearly seizing me up to the lamp-post as possible, and hanging me without judge or jury, when having discovered that I was an Englishman, they let me drop souse into the mud as if I was nothing at all. Few can say that of themselves. I only wish that you had seen me!"

"I should have been sorry to do that," said Abel. "But I fear we shall long feel the effects of the French Revolution."

"Ay," said Woodby, looking sad and drawing a deep sigh, "I don't know what will become of us,—things were never in a worse state!"

Abel, recollecting the words of his sister, then said, "But the prices of stocks keep up pretty well, don't they? I think my brother John calls them the barometer of the times."

At the words "prices of stocks," Woodby's face clothed itself with a new expression, and, like the old war-horse, that pricks up his ears upon hearing the sound of a trumpet and longs to be off, he felt at those words that all the fascinations of the Stock Exchange had come upon him with their former power. "Prices of stocks!" he exclaimed;

"what do you know of the prices of stocks?" his eyes at the same time twinkling with a true broker's twinkle.

Abel then no longer delayed giving him in as few words as possible the real object of his visit, and asking his advice upon the best mode of proceeding to put his scheme into practice.

Aunt Bab had been perfectly right in her judgment upon Woodby's character: for it is probable that if Abel had made a point blank statement of his case, and asked his advice as if he were addressing himself to a professional merchant, Woodby would have entrenched himself in his shields, his lodges, and his dignities, and taken offence; but, brought on, as it had been, in this gradual and seemingly unpremeditated manner, the whole broker was declared at once by a natural impulse, and he embraced with eagerness the scheme proposed to his consideration. He inquired, with an interest that astonished and delighted Abel, in what manner he could serve him; and when he found that it was his intention to invest his money in the Mexican funds, he did not hesitate for a moment in encouraging his design, and gave him all the proper directions how to put it into execution. He said that disposing of one's money with such great interest and such like securities was like eating one's cake and keeping it,—that it was better than actual gold and silver, for that it saved one the trouble of a banker, inasmuch as it was buried in the earth. He then informed him how he might get a proper power of attorney made out to empower his bankers in London to act for him, and said that he himself would write to his own bankers to facilitate the operation.

Abel was all gratitude at this act of kindness from one upon whom he had no other claim than the fortuitous one of being a country neighbour, and made his acknowledgments accordingly. Woodby, however, was by no means a disinterested adviser, although he looked like a man who would fain believe that he was entitled to gratitude. The truth, be it spoken, was, Woodby was himself possessor of a large sum of money in the Mexican funds; and as an experienced navigator, when he sees a small cloud rising in a suspicious point of the horizon, knows that a storm is likely to ensue, so, by certain indications in the temper of the Stock Exchange, he began to apprehend that Mexican stock might soon be at a discount, and therefore was only watching a fitting opportunity to get rid of his venture with the least possible loss. What then was

his delight when he found that, instead of an expected loss, his good stars were about to visit him with unlooked-for gain!

"Mexico," said Woodby, "is an astonishingly rich country. We are told that every domestic article there is made of silver, down to their wash-hand basins, pewter pots, &c. You can't go wrong in investing your money in its funds: besides, they say, you know, as new brooms sweep clean, why shouldn't new republics pay to the day?"

"Ah," said Abel, "that is what my brother John told us. He said that they had more money than they knew what to do with: but I have since been thinking, Mr. Woodby, if that is the case, why do they want money from us? Perhaps you can tell me."

"Why, you see," answered Woodby, looking wise, "it is just this:—You may have your barn full of corn; but what is the use of it if you have none of the implements necessary to thresh it out, and no mill wherewith to grind it, before you make it into bread? So it is with the Mexicans;—they possess the ore, but they want the means of turning it to use. They borrow from us to provide themselves with the means, for which they pay a great interest, being certain ere long to repay the capital borrowed.—Pray," said Woodby with an air of business which spoke much for the broker, and but little for the owner of shields and the descendant of an ancient family,—"Pray, what may be the amount of the stock you require?"

Abel mentioned the amount to the best of his knowledge; when Woodby, making up a look composed of friendship and protection, said, "Now, Allnutt, I'll show you how much I am your friend; I'll furnish you with the money!"

"Will you indeed!" exclaimed Abel with an expression of grateful feeling beaming in his countenance: "but that I can never allow; I will never consent to take that from you which you value so much."

"Oh, never mind that!" said Woodby; "you shall have the money, and I'll write to my bankers immediately to communicate with yours upon the subject. I'll take no refusal."

"But it must not and shall not be!" said Abel, determined, as he thought, not to be outdone in generosity. "How can I deprive you of the advantages which you have described? shall I prevent you from eating your cake and keeping it to?"

"Say no more about it," said Woodby with vivacity; "I've settled it, so no more."

"I cannot acquiesce in so much goodness," retorted Abel: "can I forget that you said money in Mexican bonds was better secured than in your bankers' hands? I am determined not to deprive you of such advantages."

"You'll make me angry!" again replied Woodby, who was really beginning to be nettled; "I'll have no further reply: when I have once determined upon a thing, nothing can turn me. You shall be supplied: and as for the advantages you talk of, let them be forgotten in the pleasure I have of being of service to you."

Abel was quite overpowered by what he considered an act of gratuitous liberality, and Woodby rose in his estimation at least a hundred per cent. Unused as he was to transactions of this kind, ignorant of their details, and accustomed to consider every one as honest as himself, little did he suppose that Woodby's conduct on this occasion was prompted by any motive save that of a pure disinterested desire to be useful. He therefore made his acknowledgments accordingly, and would have departed at once to make known the joyful tidings to his sisters, had not Woodby in the fulness of his exultation insisted upon his staying to take some luncheon before he resumed his walk, to which Abel, not knowing how to resist, consented.

CHAPTER VI.

Showing by what small means importance may be appreciated.

GREAT events are frequently produced from trifling causes: the intentions of a minister are sometimes discovered by a single phrase, a secret may be disclosed by a a nod, and a man's character may be divined from one single act. It was thus with Mr. Goold Woodby's luncheon. From the circumstances attendant upon that meal, to which Abel had been invited, the reader may probably draw inferences which will save us the trouble of entering into a long description of the Woodby household, and he will learn by deduction that which we shall be

happy to be saved the necessity of asserting in broad plain terms.

Belvedere Hall had been fitted up at great expense. It contained handsome rooms, with much costly furniture; and wherever the eye turned, the conclusion was self-evident that nothing had been spared "to do the thing handsome," as is frequently said on such occasions. After Abel had finished his conversation with Mr. Woodby, he was taken to the dining-room, where the table was spread for luncheon, and there he awaited for a short time the arrival of the host and hostess. A door which was wide open led into an adjoining apartment, evidently the drawing-room, and thither Abel walked to while away the time. Every thing within was so papered over, covered and pinned up, that it was plain, excepting on particular occasions, the whole was as sacred as the chambers of the Inquisition. A half-open shutter disclosed the riches which it contained, and shed its light into an adjacent room, which was in the same dishabille. Just as Abel had finished his survey, and was retreating from the cheerless apartments, he was met by Mrs. Goold Woodby, who was then entering, followed by one of her daughters. We are sorry to detain the reader by another personal description, but it is absolutely necessary in order to give a true colouring to the following sketch. The lady in question was one of those persons who, to certain tastes, come under the denomination of a "fine woman." Her complexion was fair, her eyes light, her hair not dark; and although she wore an anxious look, still the habit of her face was to smile. She was now about fifty years old, but might be called a young-looking woman for her age. Her pretensions to beauty she had long given up to her daughters; but since her installation in this fine house, and in consequence of her neighbourhood to certain persons of consequence with whom she had interchanged visits, she had extended the boundaries of her pretensions to gentility, and it was a subject worthy of remark, how gradual had been her advances, in that most difficult, most capricious, and coyest of qualities, since she first emerged from the city; for she was then a creature of a different species to what she afterwards proved in the country. She there had lived with those whose contempt for the letter *h* was unbounded, whose pronouns were plainly demonstrative, and whose designations were generally made after the following examples, viz.—"*this here man*," "*that there cow*," *them there pies*." She at that time used frequently to be herself found tripping; but now the gramma-

tical construction of her sentences, by a certain caution which she imposed upon herself, had assumed a more refined form. So anxious was she to be thought well-bred, that, as those who prove too much prove nothing, she was apt to overstrain her efforts. She never asked any one 'to eat,' but 'to partake;' nobody 'lived' in a place, they always 'resided:' if she described a woman's dress, she was not 'dressed,' but 'attired.' Thus, from downright coarseness, she had glided into a sort of bland vulgarity; and we must leave our narrative to help her through her dilemmas without further preliminary,—not without a hint that, like all persons in her position in life, she laid a great stress upon the redeeming properties of riches, and thought she might occasionally have a right to clip the king's English, provided she did not curtail his gold.

The Allnutts in her estimation were what she called very genteel, on account of that circumstance which she ever bore uppermost in her mind—their being related to a nobleman; but as they were poor, she allowed herself great latitude in their company, and permitted Cheapside to float more upon the surface than when she was under the high pressure of genteel restraint. As for Abel, she looked upon him as so entirely insignificant, that his presence scarcely put her out of her way. On this occasion, when she met him in her dining-room, observing that he had been in "her suite," as she called her drawing-rooms, she said, "Those are clever rooms, an't they Mr. Allnutt? We are going to unpaper soon, because we are to have company. You see we never sit there unless we have company, because it would be a pity to be spoiling of handsome furniture, which nobody sees but ourselves. The silk of those curtains cost fifteen shillings a yard; the carpets are real Kidderminster; and as for the tables, all real rosewood, they were knocked down to Mr. Goold Woodby at the auction for more than any body else would give, although he was bidding against Lord Thorofield.—I think you have seen them unpapered?"

"Yes," said Abel; "I remember to have seen them when you had the goodness to invite us to your ball last year."

"So you did," said Mrs. Woodby. "Ah, you recollect that ball, do you? We are going to have our house full now: there will be Lord Demone and Lady Thomson, and several others."

"Won't Edward Manby be here?" inquired her daughter with an anxious exclamation, to which the mother paid no heed, but continued.

"My girls want me to give another ball this year, but I won't.—I tell you what, though—which I'll tell you as a secret—we are thinking of giving a fancy bazaar next spring or summer, and then the girls may dance—a thing all for charity's sake."

"That will be nice!" exclaimed Miss Woodby, who till now had taken no notice of Abel: "that's a dear good mamma!"

Miss Woodby was a handsome person, of bloom unrivalled, of well-poised stature, and whose head was so overloaded with fair golden hair, that not all the props of combs and velvet ligatures could keep it in order. She had pretty features, but no countenance: health spoke through her brilliant skin and vermilion lips, but she was Hebe without softness;—a Hebe who, if the gods had been addicted to malt liquors, would have been better fitted to pour out beer than nectar. Miss Woodby was reckoned one of the beauties of that part of the country, although her sister Ellen, who certainly had not a quarter of her brilliancy, had more admirers. We must leave their perfections to the gradual development of our narrative, and in the mean while must proceed with our luncheon.

Great indeed was the falling off from the awe inspired by the massive lodges, the double shields, the castellated mansion, and the general exterior of grandeur, to the chill produced by the fragments of food arrayed on the board which called itself luncheon. On a large white earthenware dish edged with green paint was displayed the elderly remains of a cold leg of pork, which evidently had so frequently appeared on the same service, that there was nothing more left thereof than about two inches of importunate gristle which clung with pertinacity to the well-scraped bone. A stale half-eaten apple-tart, in a very remote corner of which about a spoonful of apple had taken refuge, was made to face the pork; whilst under an indented block-tin cover, brought in with great state, a small half-dozen of smoking potatoes were discovered, by way of christening the whole with the cheering epithet of a hot meal.

At this juncture entered Mr. Woodby, rubbing his hands, looking hungry, and sparkling with exultation at the result of his morning's interview with Abel. "My dear," said he addressing his wife, "we must not starve our guest after his walk; we must have something more."

All the answer he got was a knitting of the brow from

his wife, accompanied by a significant shake of the head, as if to say, "This will do very well for him."

Woodby appeared not to take the hint, but continued—"Let us broil the bone at least. Allnutt, you are fond of a broiled bone, an't you?"

Abel said he was but a small eater at best, and therefore hoped that nothing more might be provided on his account.

Mrs. Woodby's face cheered up at these words; but her husband calling for wine, it resumed all its look of moroseness. She curled her features into every contortion which might mean *no*, but without effect—he insisted upon having wine until she was fairly obliged to seek the keys, of which she was ever the faithful depositary, and then, in her rage, fairly left the room, wondering and storming within herself what could possess Mr. Woodby to call for wine when there was nobody there but Abel.

In the mean while Miss Woodby thought it right to speak to Abel, of whom she made all the necessary inquiries concerning his sisters, heard with delight of Miss Mary Allnutt's arrival, (of whose beauty, let it be said, she was of course jealous,) and then launched out on the subject which much filled the minds of herself and the neighbourhood—the anticipated fancy bazaar in the spring, with the money of which it was intended to build a new schoolhouse. Aunt Fanny was her particular friend among the Allnuts, and she was in the habit of making her a sort of confidant,—a recipient for all her likes and dislikes—for all those retreats and advances, those conceptions and misconceptions, which are so apt to form the furniture of a young lady's mind when it has not been tutored and kept in order by sagacious parents. Aunt Fanny, who was still happy to be thought a bird of the same feather as this blooming girl, was nothing loth to lend her ear to whatever might be poured therein; and thus was established that sort of thing between them called, in young ladies' language, 'friendship.'

"I hope your sister Fanny," said Miss Woodby, "is hard at work for us. Can you tell me what she has settled to work upon that rug that she has in hand—a cow or a Turk?—Tell her again, from me, that I am all for the cow:—I hate those nasty Turks with their long beards—fa!"

"I really don't know," said Abel; "she is always hard at work."

"You must set your niece at work for us too," continued his fair companion.

"What can she do?" Is she clever? I hear she is very clever. Can she make screens? Can she make figures that dress and undress?"

"What are you saying there, Anne?" exclaimed her father, as he caught her last words, through the vigour of his mastications: "what can you mean?"

"La! papa," answered his daughter, "I'm talking to Mr. Allnutt about our bazaar: I said nothing improper, did I, Mr. Allnutt? Do you think Miss Mary could make us a pair of such figures—one a man, the other a woman? You can't think how well they would sell; and nothing of the like has been seen in this part of the country, yet."

"I am not yet acquainted with the extent of my niece's accomplishments," said Abel. "I think I am certain that she draws flowers very prettily; but," added he, innocently "I am not prepared to say whether she can make the sort of figures you allude to."

"Do let her try," said Miss Woodby: "I am sure she must know something new, since she's just arrived fresh from town; for country folks are in general so ignorant."

"I'll mention the subject to her with the greatest pleasure," said Abel, "and also will deliver your message to my sister Fanny;" and he made a motion to depart, when, at the same moment, the servant came in with the key, and, with all the proper etiquettes due to the mysterious contents of a well-administered cellaret, brought out two decanters, one containing about an inch of port, and the other three inches of sherry.

"Take a glass of wine before you go," said Woodby to his guest, "and let us drink success to Mexico."

"I never drink wine," said Abel; "but I'll wish every success to Mexico notwithstanding."

During the time that Woodby took to make his libation, his daughter exhibited a second display of her charitable zeal, by saying, "But you, Mr. Allnutt,—you can do something for us, can't you?"

"I fear I am really worth nothing to any body," said Abel, with great humility. "Only tell me what I can do, and I will do it to the best of my ability. But, alas! I have always thought that I was one of those creatures who are only born 'to look about them and to die.'"

"Could not you write a book for us, or any such thing?" said Anne.

"A book opens a large field, to be sure," said Abel, smiling and shaking his head at the same time. "What sort of book?"

"Oh," said Miss Woodby, "any thing. Telemachus, Johnson's Dictionary, or Tom Jones—any thing will do."

"That would be any thing, indeed," exclaimed Abel, with great good humour—when Woodby, having finished his meal, arose, and as Abel wished his fair daughter good morning, they left the room together, and shortly after the house.

Woodby was anxious to say a few parting words to Abel upon the business which they had previously settled, in order to instruct him upon the mode of getting the proper power of attorney made out, and also upon the nature of the letter he was to write in forwarding that document to his bankers in London. He therefore walked with him as far as his new lodges, and on the road made the necessary communications. When they had got there, the consequential man, all at once, lost sight of the broker, and, as if suddenly exalted by the sight of his shields, like one who feels proud at being allowed to stand in the same room with a king, he made a full stop—and, whilst he threw his arms crossed over his breast, he tossed his head up, and said: "Ah, I think that will do very well. *Je voudrai si je coudraï:* just the thing—beats Lord Thorofield hollow! Stone has done the thing well! Ah, *aurum quam bonum!* Capital! This is handsome, Allnutt, is it not?"

"Very handsome," said Allnutt, in a hurried manner, and added: "I'll now wish you good-by'e."

"Good-b'ye," said Woodby. "You must all come and dine with us soon, do you hear? We will let you know. We shall have Lord Demone, and Lady Thomson, and some more. You'll be sure to come, and then I will show you the original Goold coat of arms."

"Good-b'ye," said Abel; and fearful of more explanations, he squeezed his hand and fled.

"Your servant," said Woodby.

CHAPTER VII.

How ignorant some people may be of what every body is supposed to know!

ABEL bent his steps homewards, his thoughts full of the events of the morning. The fears which he had entertained that this attempt to increase their fortune would prove disastrous had entirely vanished; for Woodby's conversation had so confirmed his brother's views, that he could no longer feel any apprehensions as to the result of the transfer about to be made. His heart was full of gratitude towards Woodby for the readiness with which he had espoused the interests of himself and his sisters, and more particularly for the great sacrifice which he was convinced he had made of his own advantage in order to secure theirs. He was ever apt to look upon the bright side of things, and ready to approve of, and like, every person with whom he came into contact: he therefore glanced with lenity at the instances of meanness and vanity which he had remarked during his visit, and would not allow himself to criticise with asperity what, in the estimation of others more versed in the ways of the world, would have been ridiculed and condemned without compunction.

When he met his sisters at dinner, his first words were to extol the kindness and attentions of the Woodbys; and having done so, he related in the fullest detail the success which had attended his mission.

"Did not I tell you that you would succeed?" said Aunt Barbara, taking the whole merit of it to herself. "He was sure to talk about the French Revolution, and then you clinched him: was it not so? I'm sure I'm right."

"It was exactly so," said Abel: "he seemed quite ready to meet my wishes, and espoused our interests exactly as if they were his own."

"I always said Mr. Woodby was a good man," said Barbara, "whatever people might say about his pride, and his love of grandeur and old families."

"I believe he is as good a creature as ever lived," said Fanny.

"What a dear man he must be," said the gentle Mary with great vivacity, "for being so kind to you, uncle Abel!"

"And what did Mrs. Woodby say?" inquired Aunt Bab;

"did you talk to her about our scheme? I fear she will grudge us our good fortune."

"No, I did not," said Abel; "I only saw her at luncheon. She talked to me principally about the company she was shortly to have in her house, and about unpapering her rooms."

"Who is she to have?" said Aunt Fanny: "did she mention any names?"

"I think she said—indeed I am certain she mentioned Lady Thomson and Lord De— Do—— Lord Somebody, I think she said, and others."

"Who can he be?" said Fanny. "Let us see.—Oh, I know!—it must be Lord Demone; he is an Irishman—the Woodbys do nothing but rave about him. Anne Woodby told me that her parents wished her to marry him; but, la! he's old enough to be her father."

"And who is Lady Thomson?" said Barbara.

"What! have you never heard of Lady Thomson?" said Fanny; "Mrs. Woodby's Lady Thomson?—why, she can think and talk of nothing else. She is called a rich widow, and is every thing at Cheltenham—they call her the Queen of Cheltenham—she can do whatever she pleases with the Woodbys. I have never seen her, but I hear that she is a prodigious person, wearing such turbans and possessing such shawls!" Then turning to Abel, she inquired whether Edward Manby was not to be of the party.

"I think Miss Woodby said something about him," said Abel; "but I did not pay great attention."

"And who is Edward Manby?" inquired Mary in a timid accent. "I never heard his name mentioned before."

"Oh, the Woodbys call him a charming young man, and so handsome they say!" exclaimed Aunt Fanny with enthusiasm. "Nobody knows who or what he is; but he is somebody's nephew, that's certain, and he is patronised by Mr. Woodby; and, what's more, I hear wears the most charming waistcoats you ever saw. He is such a favourite!"

"He is young Woodby's friend, I believe," said Aunt Bab. "He is said to be a very civil, well-conditioned youth; but, for my part, I am always afraid of your mysterious youths—they are always to be suspected."

"Suspected!—suspected of what!" exclaimed Mary with innocent warmth. "What can he have done?"

"It does not matter," said Aunt Bab; "but I know I'm right—it stands to reason that I'm right."

In this manner did the two aunts, the uncle and the niece, pass the evening; sometimes chatting of their neighbours, at others of their future prospects, and ever and anon wondering what John was doing at that moment. They were about retiring to their beds, when Aunt Barbara all at once exclaimed, as if she had forgotten something of importance, "But, Abel, you have not told us yet by what means we are to get our money transferred from the English to the Mexican funds: do tell us before we go to bed."

"As to that," said Abel, "it must be done through Cruikshank the attorney."

"Through Cruikshank!" exclaimed Aunt Fanny in amazement.

"And how can he do it?" said Aunt Bab.

"Through a power of attorney," said Abel: "that's the way to get it."

"Cruikshank! a power of attorney!" again exclaimed Fanny as she left the room and went up to her bed. "Who would have thought it?"

"Well, we shall see," said Aunt Bab, little understanding the nature of the transaction. "I suppose it's all right. John must know best; but ——" Then, shaking her head, she also went to bed, ruminating in her mind how such things were done, and still shaking her head as she thought upon Cruikshank.

Abel gave his blessing to his niece as she tripped up to her room, and the cottage was soon after wrapt in the rest and quiet of night.

It has occurred to us, and we doubt whether it will not also have occurred to most of our readers, to meet with instances of ignorance in the commonest affairs of life among men and women—but more particularly among women, which might be said to amount to idiotism, were it not certain that there is as great a variety in the structure of minds as there is in the composition of the features of faces. Aunt Fanny was a striking illustration of this observation, as will be seen by what is immediately about to follow; although when it is taken into consideration, that living a life of more seclusion than falls to the lot of most modern ladies, her ignorance might fairly be accounted for on that ground alone.

She, who usually was the latest at breakfast, was on the following morning the first to make her appearance. Her mind seemed full of some impelling thought which required to expend itself by utterance. Therefore, as soon as Aunt Barbara appeared, she exclaimed, "Barbara, it never will do!"

"Do what?" said Barbara.

"Why, Cruikshank—Cruikshank, to be sure," rejoined Fanny.

"And what of Cruikshank?" said Barbara.

"Surely you understand," said Fanny: "he never will do."

"He never will do what?" answered Aunt Bab, looking all amazed.

"You are quite provoking!" said Fanny: "I have been thinking of him all night, and I am sure he never will do,—he is such a little man."

"But what is he to do?" said Barbara.

"You heard what Abel said as well as I did," said Fanny: "he said our money was to be got at by an attorney of power; and you can't surely say that little Cruikshank is the man."

"An attorney of power!" exclaimed the astonished Barbara; "Fanny! what can you mean?"

"Why, did not Abel say that an attorney of power was to go to London to get at our money, and to do what John said was to be done with it, and that Cruikshank was the man? We surely ought to have a man of more power than that little fellow. He never will do;—who would give our money to him? We ought to get some good, stout, handsome man, to be sure, to do the business."

"You must be wrong, Fanny," said Barbara, puzzled. "I don't think that Abel said an attorney of power—I think he said a power of attorney, whatever that may be; and I should suppose that to be a different thing—at least I think so, for does it not stand to reason that they can't mean the same thing!"

"It must mean the same thing, though," said Fanny, "for I turned the words over in my mind all the night through a thousand times, and I could come to no other conclusion than that he meant a fine, handsome, strong man—in short an attorney of power."

"It may be so," said Barbara; "but I think I'm right when I say that I understood Abel otherwise;—but here he comes."

As soon as Abel entered the room, Fanny was the first to cry out, "Now, Abel, did not you say that our money was to be got by an attorney of power?"

"An attorney of power?" exclaimed Abel, "what do you mean?"

"I thought that I was right," said Aunt Bab; "I thought he said a power of attorney."

"And so I did," said Abel.

"Then pray what has Cruikshank to do with it?" said Fanny. "I am sure you mentioned his name.

"And so I did," said Abel; "he is to make it out."

"How can he make it out," rejoined Fanny; "such a poor, little, miserable thing as he is, how can he make any thing out like power."

"My dear Fanny," said Abel, smiling, "I am afraid that you got out of your bed this morning with your wrong leg foremost, for you have strangely misunderstood this matter."

"Indeed!" said Fanny, with some little mortification in her tone and manner; "it is not strange if I have misunderstood it. You tell us first that Cruikshank is to get our money for us; then that he is to be the power of attorney, or the attorney of power, just as you please, but which appear to me to mean one and the same thing; and now you say that he is to make it out. Make what out, I should like to know?"

"Why, the power of attorney, to be sure," said Abel. "A power of attorney is a piece of paper, and not a man: when it is duly written according to the prescribed forms, signed, sealed, and delivered, all of which was explained to me by Mr. Woodby, it then empowers one person to act for another. Cruikshank, being an attorney, is to make this out—we shall sign it; it will then be sent to our bankers in London, who will thus be empowered to act for us. Now do you understand me?"

"I said as much," said Barbara, looking wise and significant. "Now I understand the whole thing."

"Then a power of attorney is a piece of paper, and not a strong man," said Fanny, with a dogged and mortified look; "well, I thought otherwise."

"If it were a strong, handsome man," said Abel, with the greatest good-humour to his sister, "then you were perfectly right in thinking that poor Cruikshank could be no candidate for the office, nor do I much wonder at your ignorance. To this day, since the death of our dear fa-

ther, never have we had the smallest occasion to disturb the deposit which he left for our maintenance. I was equally ignorant until Mr. Woodby enlightened me on the subject. And now the next thing to be done is, that I immediately proceed to put his directions into practice; I will set Cruikshank to work this very morning.

So much having been settled, Abel took his way to the village, found the attorney, who, in truth, was a little shrivelled old man, who had made the wills of the neighbourhood for half a century, and esteemed the oracle on matters both foreign and domestic by all the simple-hearted peasantry: soon completed the task to which he had been appointed.

The little community of Ivycote in the mean while had received intelligence of John's arrival at Liverpool, of the arrangements which he had made previous to his embarkation, and at length of his departure. His last letter was full of promises to write upon every occasion—full of sanguine anticipations of success in his own schemes, and of hopes for an excellent result in the one which he had suggested to their notice. Aunt Bab, who idolized her brother, and, notwithstanding his many failures in making a fortune, still had the highest idea of his understanding, dwelt with admiration on every word he wrote, and, when his letters were read aloud, listened with breathless attention; whilst Fanny, equally affectionate, but less awake to his schemes, was only animated when he described men and manners. The tender Mary would devour every thing he wrote with an attention that indicated how deeply she loved her parent; whilst Abel, without saying much, would listen, and, as he listened, would speculate and draw his own conclusions upon the subjects that were brought before his mind, but never finished without some benevolent ejaculation, praying for his brother's health and prosperity.

The power of attorney was duly made out, and, when presented by Cruikshank for signature, he was thanked as if he had conferred a great family benefit; when many an innocent joke passed, as they surveyed his person, at Aunt Fanny's mistake and aberration of imagination. The document was forwarded by the post with due solemnity; the hours were counted when the answer and result would be received; and, in the expectation of that event, we will for the present close this chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

The results of shallow education upon frivolous minds. Misses Anne and Ellen Goold Woodby.

In due course of time an answer arrived from the bankers in London, announcing the completion of the transaction precisely in accordance with the orders which they had received, by which the family of Ivycote, fulfilling the prognostics made by John Allnutt, were put into possession of a comfortable increase of income.

In anticipation of this event, they had frequently discussed among themselves the use to which they would apply their additional revenue. Barbara insisted upon adding to their domestic comforts—buying some necessary articles of furniture, renewing others, and, above all, enlarging the measure of their hospitality. Abel had no ambition beyond that of extending their charity and making themselves useful to the poor; whilst Fanny insisted, as a preliminary to further schemes, that honest Brown's hat should be ornamented with a gold-lace band, and, moreover, that two gold-laced button-holes should be added to the collar of his livery-coat. We mention these circumstances, as they will tend to illustrate the characters of the three individuals here mentioned; and we do not include their niece, the retiring and unpretending Mary, because, at this period of our story, she was too young and too little of a personage to be supposed to have any opinion of her own. She naturally acquiesced in every thing that was proposed—obedience and docility were the habits of her mind; no cloud was ever seen to cross her brow, and she seemed only to exist in the love and approbation of those who surrounded her.

They had been some time seated in council, discussing the various subjects of interest in the family brought on by their increase of fortune, when the wheels of a carriage were heard approaching the door, and soon Miss Woodby and her sister Ellen made their appearance. After the first greetings, Miss Woodby announced that she had been sent by her papa and mamma to invite the whole party to dinner at a future day, which she named; and, as

an incentive, added, that they would meet Lady Thomson. In her estimation it was sufficient to mention "Lady Thomson," and all was said. At Belvedere Hall this personage was looked upon as the beginning and the end of all gentility; and Miss Woodby expected that her name would produce the same effect at Ivycote. She hoped to have seen them all jump with delight at the invitation, but was mortified to find that it was received in solemn silence; for as such an event at Ivycote was rare, its first effect was to produce a pause, and then a deliberation. Abel and Fanny looked to Barbara for a decision, who, after a due quantity of acknowledgments for the honour and the kindness, and so forth, finding that she was properly seconded, accepted it.

Miss Woodby, upon hearing this, expressed herself very much pleased, and said she was sure that they would be delighted to know Lady Thomson, because nothing could be kinder than she was—and then she was a knight's widow, and so very genteel! She added, that she saw the best company at Cheltenham, and a good deal of it; and then whispered to her friend Fanny, "Would you believe it, she is so very high bred, that she thinks nothing is half good enough for her; and, moreover, never will sit in the same room with a tallow-candle!"

Finding that the visiters were likely to make a long stay, Aunt Barbara left them to busy herself in household affairs; Abel returned to his room, thus leaving Fanny to entertain her young friends; whilst Mary lingered on to improve an acquaintance with Ellen, who was about her own age.

As soon as Anne Woodby found herself released from the severer presence of Aunt Barbara and the grave looks of Abel, she was carried off at once by her usual high spirits, and relieved herself by a burst of volubility.

"Will there be no one else at Belvedere besides Lady Thomson?" inquired Fanny.

"Oh dear, yes," said Anne, "she usually brings several men with her. You have heard of Lord Demone—I told you all about him before;—well he is one—is it not horrible? You see Lady Thomson is so very genteel that she must have a lord with her; and she is so very fond of me, and is so anxious that I should be genteel too, that she is positively wild to marry me to this man. Now, isn't it horrible? he is old enough to be my father, they say; and then he is so ugly, and dresses so much like a

scrub—there is no bearing it—I'm sure I won't for one. Lady Thomson says that I am too fastidious; but I'm sure I'm right in being fastidious—Pa always told me that I ought to be fastidious, for that I'm to have a large fortune when I marry, and I'm sure it is quite right to be fastidious. Now don't you think, Fanny, I should be quite wrong not to be fastidious?" she said to her friend with a most beseeching look.

Aunt Fanny was about to answer this appeal to her feelings and judgment, when, without waiting the result, Miss Woodby continued to disburthen her heart.—"Oh, I wish you had been with us at Cheltenham this summer, you would have had such fun. We were always along with Lady Thomson; and, as she was the head of the society there, we did whatever we liked. You ought to have seen how we were followed about—I am sure I was called very proud. I made it a rule always to turn my back upon every man who was not regularly introduced; you can't think how I frumped them."

Upon hearing this, Mary, whose ear had caught this declaration, looked quite astonished, and even distressed.

"Well," continued Anne, "and we never, at home or abroad, walked, rode, sat, or lounged, without being surrounded by officers: there were some such nice ones—one such a love!" (Here Mary blushed.)—"Oh! you ought to have seen how we went on; but I was so very proud. Only think, one night at a ball at the rooms, which was given under the patronage of Lady Thompson, I had such an adventure. We all followed Lady Thomson, and entered the rooms, quite a crowd of us,—quite a galaxy, as the papers said. The master of the ceremonies came up and asked to introduce Mr. Dolittle to me, son of Messrs. Dolittle, the bankers of Cheltenham; before I could say yea or nay, there was my man close at hand, and he was introduced. I had no choice left; and, just as he was coming up, the master of the ceremonies had time to whisper behind his hand into my ear, that he drove a phaeton and kept his own hounds: so he asked me to dance, and I said yes, quite thoughtlessly. Well, when it was time to stand up, who should come up and insist upon my dancing with him, but Captain Swaggle, in full uniform. You know I could not resist this; and when Mr. Dolittle came to claim my hand, you ought to have seen what a fuss there was. I believe they would have fought on the spot, only the master of the ceremonies interfered; but Lady Thompson

was very angry with me, because she is so very high bred she can't think of transgressing the rules of the Cheltenham ball-room."

"Well, and what happened after that?" inquired Aunt Fanny, whilst Mary looked all aghast with apprehension.

"Oh!" said Miss Woodby, "I was obliged to make Mr. Dolittle an apology,—only think of that; and then, by way of making it up, I was obliged to dance with him; but then he became so very familiar, it was quite shocking, for—would you believe it?—he was impertinent enough to snatch a rose from my hand, for we all carried bouquets, and then he stuck it in his button-hole; but I was up to him, for, when he was looking another way, I snatched it from him in my turn, and strewed it in a thousand bits on the floor. You ought to have seen how he looked. He was quite mortified, and then said, 'Oh! Miss Woodby, you are a dear little'——such a word he said!—'a dear little devil:' now wasn't that shocking? But I served him quite right, didn't I? I know I am too fastidious perhaps; but such a man as Mr. Dolittle has no business to put himself so forward, has he?

Miss Woodby delivered herself of the above effusion with a volubility and an energy that can only be compared to the impetus of a train of fireworks; her frequent stops to make an interrogation acting like the pause which takes place at the extinction of one wheel, before the ignition of a second.

Aunt Fanny, who in her day had figured at country balls, had danced with captains, and had gone through the probation of having flowers snatched from her, and who still hoped, that she was not utterly rejected by man, was pleased to have her recollections revived by the conversation of her young friend; but Mary, who to this time had been brought up by those who were jealous even to a fault of the purity of her mind, and who was as ignorant as an infant of the ways of the world,—was entirely confounded by what she heard from Miss Woodby. She at first attempted to engage Ellen Woodby's attention by talking to her upon the various subjects of work, books, drawing, flowers, and dress; but, finding her wholly absorbed in what her sister was saying, she was obliged to direct her attention there also; and as the various topics of Cheltenham, Lady Thomson's supremacy, her own fastidiousness, Mr. Dolittle's forwardness, and Captain Swaggle's charms were discussed, she evinced astonishment,

some slight amusement tinctured with some share of disgust, and looked upon her new acquaintances as creatures of a new genus. And here, as a French preacher once said, who had ventured to address an English congregation in their own tongue, 'Having finished our three *pints*, we will draw a little *more-ale*'—here we may remark of what consequence it is, in order to preserve the purity of youthful minds, that they should never be permitted to hear any conversation of the nature which we have here recorded, before their minds are so well prepared by principle, that they would be able at once to recognise wrong and right upon their own perceptions. Let us ask what can be more enervating to the mind,—what more destructive of purity of thought and single-mindedness—than those frequent allusions to lax and unrestrained conduct, implied in Miss Woodby's words, between young people of different sexes? Mary had been brought up in the abhorrence of every thing bearing the remotest affinity to levity, and in the love of every thing that encouraged virtue, and, new as Miss Woodby's effusions were to her ears, she instinctively settled in her own mind that she could not have enjoyed the same advantages of education as herself, and therefore charitably made allowances for her misfortune. But had any other young person, whose mind left unprotected by principle, and open to the intrusion of frivolity,—had she been in Mary's place, what might have been the consequence? Most probably she would have become dissatisfied with the tameness and seclusion of her life, she would have longed for Cheltenham and Lady Thomson, she would have burned with impatience to make herself dear to Swaggle, and been ardent with zeal to annihilate Dolittle. She would have dreamt of officers in full uniform, of snatching and demolishing roses, of the obsequiousness of masters of ceremonies, of bankers driving phaetons, and of old lords driven to despair.

Aunt Fanny, finding that her friend Anne Woodby's effusions had only yet half commenced, and that in proportion as her patience to hear became manifest, so the desire of the other to communicate increased, prudently withdrew into a further corner of the room, for she had sense enough to perceive that the conversation which had hitherto taken place was not adapted to Mary's taste, and thus she left her and Ellen Woodby together.

Mary therefore made another attempt to draw Ellen into conversation, who, on her part, having hitherto been kept

silent by the interest which her sister's communications had created, was nothing loth. Ellen who, according to the received phrase, was not yet *out*, from not yet having quite opened in the book of life the chapter which explained its realities, was absorbed in sentiment, and lived in the indulgence of that species of poetry, peculiar to the imagination of young ladies, which is so apt to turn young men into Edwins and themselves into Emmas. There was a sentimental cast in her countenance and manner: her hair was parted flat over her brow, she sued paleness as the first of blessings, and she had not yet made up her mind whether she should look like a madonna, a nun at her vigils, or the impassioned Eloisa.

She very soon began to talk to Mary, and the subject which was nearest her heart very soon came to the surface on her lips. "Do you know Edward Manby?" she said with a deep sigh, and with her eyelashes slightly quivering over her pretty eyes.

"No," said Mary, "I have not that pleasure."

"Ah, you may well call it pleasure," said Ellen: "I do. Anne may talk of her Captain Swaggle; but I should like you to compare him to Edward Manby. The one wears his beautiful uniform, 'tis true, and moustaches; but the other, for all he will persist in dressing like any common person, without either tuft or moustaches, is so very handsome, that he beats Captain Swaggle all to atoms. He has beautiful auburn hair curling naturally to begin with: and then such eyes! you never saw the like, they positively pierce you through and through: his nose is a little aquiline —Anne says it has a turn too much; but I say it is perfect. She says too that Swaggle's teeth beat Edward's out and out; but there she is wrong again, for his are like pearls, and show so pretty whenever he opens his mouth, whereas Swaggle's lips are always shut so tight that he might have charcoal for teeth and no one would be the wiser for it. Then he has such a brow, he looks like a colonel of dragoons at least—some say he looks quite as commanding as Bonaparte, some like the royal family; but this I will say, that nobody can see him without loving him. I always feel a sort of involuntary tremor when he stands near me; and when he speaks, his voice thrills through and through me, it is so very heart-rending. Now isn't he nice?"

"I dare say he is," said Mary, not knowing exactly what to say; and, not willing to extend the subject, she endeavoured to turn it off by remarking, "Lady Thomson,

too, appears to be very kind and amiable, from all your sister says of her."

"Anne is her favourite, and she has a right to praise her," said Ellen; "but I cannot like her, she does all she can to keep Edward Manby out of our house, because she is afraid Anne will fall in love with him, and then she would not marry that old lord she is always carrying about with her; but I can tell her Edward is not the man she takes him to be. Although he is poor—and why should he not?—yet he is above pitiful pelf; he is humble and unknown, yet he has all the pride of a Marquis. I should not be at all surprised if he were a prince in disguise, although they say that he is only the son of a poor officer and the nephew of a brewer. You know that does not signify, does it?"

She made this inquiry with such real interest, as if her whole happiness depended upon it, that Mary could not refrain from catching some of her earnestness, and said,

"No, certainly; a brewer's nephew, provided he be good, is just as much entitled to one's esteem as any other man's nephew."

"Well, that is so good of you!" said Ellen, squeezing her hand; "that is what I always say, although I have all the family against me. I have inquired a great deal about brewers, and from all I hear they are excellent men, and, what's more, members of parliament. Besides, brewers' nephews may wear tufts and moustaches, and chains, and smart sticks and waistcoats, as well as other men; now mayn't they?"

"I see no good reason against it," said Mary, quite startled at the question."

"That is so very good of you!" repeated Ellen, as if Mary had done her a particular favour. "I think I might in time persuade Edward Manby to wear them, for he is so very good natured you can't think; he does every thing to please every body, and then, although he has so little money allowed him he is always buying us things, and gives all he has to any poor creature that asks him. If you ever see him, don't like him too much, Mary," said Ellen, with a sort of playful emotion, showing how deeply her affections were already engaged. "I shall be jealous of you, do you know, if you do."

"There is no fear of that," said Mary with a good-natured smile.

"I am afraid that there is though," said Ellen, "for every

body is sure to love him who knows him; there is one comfort, he is not to be at Belvidere this time, owing to that odious Lady Thomson, and so you can't love him yet."

And so terminated the *tête-à-tête;* for Miss Woodby, having fairly exhausted herself in her communications to Aunt Fanny, hastily took her leave, declaring that she should be too late to "take a ride" in the open carriage with her mamma; and hinted that they were to have their four horses out for the first time, with the new Goold Woodby liveries, in order to try how they would look before Lady Thomson came.

CHAPTER IX.

Country Simplicity.—'Where ignorance is bliss,' &c.

The family of Ivycote had not quitted their quiet and unpretending habitation for many a long day upon an expedition such as the one now set on foot by Miss Woodby's visit, and therefore it became an event in which the exertion of more than ordinary energies was requisite. Occasionally one or two individuals at a time might dine with the parish clergyman, or visit the farmer Flamborough of the neighbourhood, or even the great squire, such as Mr. Woodby might be; but to dine out *en masse* in this manner was unheard-of. Since the death of their father and the ruin of their elder brother, they had wisely kept the incognito as much as possible, and refrained from the smallest approach to display: but since the turn which their fortune had taken, and with the desire of giving Mary a chance of settling in the world, they felt it right to relax. Accordingly, the first step which the ladies of the family took, was to make a survey of their respective wardrobes. Aunt Barbara could not boast of many gowns; she had her every-day cotton and her Sunday tabinet—the one having frequently shivered in the breeze at the great family washes, and the other slumbered on a peg behind the door only to be called into action every seventh day. She therefore was perplexed what to do, particularly when she reflected before whom she was about to appear; and at

length, after as many pros and cons as a chancellor of exchequer might make ere he settled the imposition of a new tax, she determined upon the strong measure of creating an entirely new gown, and that, *mirabile dictu*, let it be properly announced, of silk. As for Aunt Fanny, she was much better provided; for, by that extraordinary ingenuity which some women possess over others, she managed almost daily to exhibit herself in a different attire. At one time a gown which was in the last stage of decrepitude would all at once come out with renewed youth, bristling with ribands and swelling with mysterious bulbs: but on this occasion she was at a nonplus, and as her heart also yearned for something new, she likewise determined to exhibit her taste and fancy in a new dress, whilst it was decided that Mary was to look cheap and lovely in white muslin. An expedition to the nearest market-town was consequently planned and forthwith executed; whilst Abel, contented with his long-tried and apparently everlasting black trousers and silk stockings, was happy to devote the hour of their absence to his much-beloved flute.

The three ladies returned with their pony-carriage laden with the purchases which they had made, the sage Barbara depending upon the solvency of the New World for the payment of this extra expense. Package after package was handed out, to the astonishment of old Betty, who had never seen such doings since the days of the family grandeur, and did not cease uttering her 'Well-a-day!' and 'I never seed the like!' until every thing was safely landed in the hall. But these ejaculations were nothing to those which followed when the contents of the packages were displayed before her. Barbara first dazzled her eyes by a gray silk; but when Fanny opened the mysteries of her purchase, which after much uncertainty of purpose she had settled should be a cherry-coloured silk, the enraptured old woman almost fainted with delight.

Then succeeded the difficulties of 'making up,' to use the mantua-maker's jargon. It was so long since a new gown had been manufactured in the family, and those that existed being of obsolete fashion, it required that some expedient should immediately be devised to secure a specimen of the last mode. In the adjoining village there were no mantua-makers, therefore in their dilemma they determined to send to the Miss Woodbys to beg the loan of one of their gowns, which they supposed would be of undoubted authority. This was soon obligingly supplied, accompanied

by a note from Miss Woodby, who said, from Lady Thomson's authority, "that tuckers were positively descending and skirts ascending, and that therefore allowances should be made in the cutting out."

As soon as the garment was exhibited, great was the astonishment it created. Upon being held up to view, after much scrutiny Aunt Bab exclaimed: "But there must be something wanting yet. Surely this can't be all the gown —it stands to reason, that something more is wanting at the top; why, it would not cover my shoulders!" They all agreed in this remark; and then, by way of ascertaining the fact beyond a doubt, they pitched upon the smiling Mary as their manikin, and requested her forthwith to strip and put on Miss Woodby's dress. This she did, accompanied by all the retiring and bewitching modesty of her nature; and when she found herself deprived of the covering to which she had been accustomed, she felt even in the presence of her aunts as if the finger of insult and mockery was pointed at her. We wish that those who daily go into crowds openly and unblushingly with their persons presented to the gaze of whoever chooses to look upon them, could have seen this beautiful maiden as she stood thus exposed, expressing in her abashed looks the true feelings of modesty which nature has implanted in woman both for her protection and to increase her attractions: they would have received a lesson which would have taught them how reprehensible is the prevailing fashion of their dress. Let them be assured, that if it be intended to secure the attention of man, the object fails, for what is common is no longer observed; and that, be he libertine or otherwise, far from admiring, he is the first to deride and contemn.

"And so tuckers are descending!" said Aunt Bab, as she turned poor Mary round and round, looking at her with horror and astonishment, her eyes being particularly attracted by that portion of the gown which was drawn like a horizontal line across her beautiful bust.—"Why, the woman must be run mad to say so! How much lower would she have them go?—What shall *I* do?"

Fanny whose heart in truth went as much with fashion as Whig or Tory goes with his party, although she could not refrain from siding with her sister in condemning what she saw before her, endeavoured to come to a compromise by saying, "You know we can trim as high as we like."

"Trim!" cried Bab, her anger increasing with reflection —"trim to be sure!—what can Lady Thomson mean?—trim indeed we will with a vengeance!—Why, if we were all to start from home in gowns like this—the very dogs of the village would howl with astonishment—it stands to reason that they would. Besides, she says we must shorten our skirts—Why, if we lower our tuckers and shorten our skirts, what becomes of the gown we may as well leave it off altogether. The woman must be mad—it stands to reason!"

Fanny attempted to soften her sister's wrath, by reminding her of the power of fashion, and how difficult it was to set one's face against it; but her words were of no avail, for Bab avowed that if no one would set their face against it, she for one would, and she would let them know what it was to dress with becoming modesty and decorum.

The gowns were soon cut out, and the whole of the female household being employed in stitching and putting them together,—for they worked as if it were a family concern of the first moment,—the whole were ready to put on even twenty-four hours before the eventful day of the dinner.

On that morning the plan of operations for the evening was settled by Aunt Barbara herself, aided by the countenance of Abel. It was arranged that he, putting his dress-shoes in his pocket, should walk to Belvideer Hall, and be ready to meet them at the door in order that they might all enter the drawing-room together; whilst the women should proceed in the pony-chaise, driven by honest Brown in his new livery, which was to be exhibited for the first time on the occasion.

Just as this had been settled, a note arrived from Miss Woodby to Aunt Fanny, which stated, "that Lady Thomson being very fond of music, her mother begged it as a particular favour that Miss Mary Allnutt would bring her music-book with her, in order that she might favour them with a song after dinner."

When Mary heard this, she almost sank into the ground with apprehension; for although she had learned music and was as good a performer upon the pianoforte as most young ladies, and although she had a sweet voice and sang little unpretending songs and ballads when she was alone, yet she had never exhibited herself to more than her father, her uncle, and aunts in her life; and therefore to sing before Lady Thomson, the head of the society at Cheltenham, and a 'lord,' and all the Woodbys, and she could not say

who besides, appeared to her an undertaking so appalling in its circumstances, and in her so presumptuous, that although she was ever ready to attend to every one's wishes, yet on this occasion she entreated and begged that she might be excused. Aunt Bab and Uncle Abel were both well inclined to accede to her wishes; but Aunt Fanny, who had a secret hope that she herself might be called upon to raise her voice for the amusement of the company, —for she in her day had had a voice, and had sung and heard 'brava!' and 'excellent!' whispered into her ear,— insisted upon Mary's acceding to Miss Woodby's request, and, by way of encouragement, said that *she* would accompany her. Poor Mary, seeing how much in earnest her aunt was in her wishes, busied herself to select the songs she could best sing; and whilst she was so doing, Aunt Fanny also slipped in an old book containing some of her own obsolete songs, in case she might have a fitting opportunity to exhibit her powers.

At length the morning of the eventful day arrived, and the hour for dressing soon followed. We will pass over all the bustle and anxiety, and gently glide over the numerous difficulties which the reader may easily suppose took place on this occasion, in order to arrive at the grand result; and we will describe the appearance of the ladies *seriatim* as rustling with unusual sounds from their dressing-rooms, they one by one disgorged from the narrow staircase and stood erect in the parlour.

Aunt Barbara, first, arrayed in her new gray gown, stood looking around her above and below as if she had been metamorphosed into some new being; and truly nobody who had seen her in the morning could well have taken her for the same person. She had indeed kept her word, and had carefully abstained from cutting out her gown according to Miss Woodby's pattern. Her neck and shoulders were comfortably covered: she had so successfully trimmed up to her very throat, that she might not unaptly be compared to one of those larger owls which, furred and ruffled up to the eyes, are sometimes pleased to look out of an ivy-bush. Then her sleeves, so large and ample in Miss Woodby's gown, she had pared away to answer very much in shape to a pair of moderate-sized bellows; and as compared to the modern forms of ladies, (for she despised all artificial redundancies of person,) she looked like a tree that had just been pollarded, or like something cut to the quick. But with all this she wore an appearance of great respect-

ability; and however strange it might appear to our eyes now, we would uphold her dress in preference to that of many a lady of fifty, who exhibits her decayed person to every glancing eye, and runs the chance of being made ill rather than forego the charm of being in the fashion.

But when Aunt Fanny made her appearance, it was quite with a different air. She could not resist the fascinations of a fashionable gown; and although she had not in fact listened to Lady Thomson's doctrine of lowering her tucker, yet she had shortened her skirts; and there she stood with her country-made shoes, exhibiting her feet, never naturally too small, looking like one uncertain whether she had done right or wrong. Her whole look and manner too were changed since the morning: living in a state of illusion concerning her real age, still thinking herself entitled to stand in the ranks of youth, she had matched her ribands to her imagination, and not to her complexion; by which means she produced a failure in general effect, like the painter who, called upon to restore a decayed landscape representing an autumnal scene, makes use of colours only adapted to the freshness of spring. The cherry-coloured silk matched ill with a complexion no longer the delight of the lily or the rose: it rose in judgment against naked arms and a bare neck, and seemed to enjoy a secret triumph in putting into confusion the ambition of approaching age, which was making this expiring effort for supremacy. In arraying herself in her new attire, she seemed to have thrown off her usual apathy of manner: all at once she assumed a youthful and lively air and manner, and tripped about in unceasing activity as if to acquire practice in the management of her feet in their new and exposed position.

Mary came down dressed with a degree of beauty and propriety which was astonishing considering that this might be called her first appearance in society, which proves that good sense, wherever it exists, will preside over every action, whether in the greater or in the smaller concerns of life. Her hair was gracefully and simply arranged, ornamented by a single flower placed precisely where it ought to be. Her dress, which was neither fashioned by the hand of prudery nor that of extravagant display, was so beautifully made, that while it sufficiently pourtrayed the grace of her form, it still retained every restraint of propriety, and made it impossible for criticism to find fault.

Altogether, nothing could be more worthy of admiration than her whole appearance.

All being ready, properly secured by cloaks and bonnets, they ascended their chaise, and honest brown then drove off with the dignity of a duke's body coachman; whilst old Betty, together with another, her companion in the kitchen, who had attended at the door to see them off, persisted in looking at them until they turned the corner of the lane and were fairly out of sight.

"Well, I declare!" said old Betty; "how charming they all looked!—how handsome was 'missis!'" (so they called Aunt Bab)—"how sweet was Miss Mary!'"

"Ah, I liked Miss Fanny best," said the other; "she was so fine!"

"Yes," said old Betty; "she was fine, 'tis true: but then 'twas a pity she was so lively—with such large feet too!"

CHAPTER X.

Lady Thomson, the Queen of Cheltenham. The effect of her presence in village life.

Ever since the day of Abel's visit to Belvidere Mrs. Goold Woodby had been in a state of unceasing activity to prepare the house for the reception of Lady Thomson. The drawing-room furniture was uncovered, the state bedroom aired, all the best china and glass were brought to light, and every thing done to denote the reception of a person of the first quality. The fact is, Mrs. Goold Woodby was ambitious of exhibiting herself in the very best colours to her friend, who had great reputation for taste and knowledge in the art of living, and who had made herself so much feared by the tyranny which she exercised wherever she went, that in every arrangement, be it in the ordering of a dish or the distribution of furniture, or in dress, or in the choice of servants, Mrs. Woodby's universal text was, "What will Lady Thomson think?" In illustration of this, we must say that she had given orders that all the men-servants down to the gardener were to be ready in attendance in the hall, duly dressed and powdered, to appear as soon as Lady Thomson should drive up, to form a lane

for her to walk through, which as she had been told, was performed in the houses of the great. The moment was now fast approaching for her ladyship's arrival; the butler, the under-butler, the two footmen, the coachman, the groom, the gardener—all were there powdered, (all except the gardener,) stiff in their new liveries, gorgeous in worsted and plush, and bristling with batteries of the largest double-crested buttons that had ever been made. When Mrs. Woodby, as agitated as any stage-manager upon a first night, came to inspect them, she observed that the gardener had not powdered his head, and inquired the reason why. The good man endeavoured to excuse himself by saying that gardeners never powdered; but when he was pressed narrowly to explain what had become of the flour which he had received for the purpose, he was obliged to confess that his wife had made it into a pudding, and that he had in a moment of temptation devoted that to his belly which had been intended for his head. We will suppress, for the honour of the sex, the feelings of anger that rose in her breast, and the form of words in which they were expressed; but just as she had ordered the culprit away to the flower-tub, the teeming equipage was perceived in the distance making the best of its way to the door, and all was hushed into order in expectation of the eventful moment. Mrs. Woodby retreated to the drawing-room for the purpose of receiving her guest with becoming dignity, her heart beating with a thousand different feelings, and seated herself upon the corner of a sofa, so prodigiously new and glossy that she thought herself committing an act of sacrilege in making a print of her person upon it. But before she did this, she loudly called to her daughters to appear, exclaiming "Anne—Ellen, come down immediately! Here is Lady Thomson coming; and if you are not here to receive her, what will she think?"

She scarcely had time to regain her breathing after this effort, before in walked Lady Thomson herself, in all the pomp and circumstance of travelling-dress, furred and velveted at all points, properly hung about with chains and brooches, lap-dog under the arm, and a lady companion bringing up the rear. Perhaps the reader may at once recognize the sort of personage we mean to introduce to his acquaintance; if he should not, then we will assert that she was as fine a specimen of the genus *maitresse femme* as might be seen: loud and free of speech, bluff in her deportment, exacting attentions, heedless of giving trou-

ble, careless of giving offence, addicted to violent wrenching of the hand, and to patting on the shoulder by way of protection and a thorough mistress of egotism in all its branches.

She walked in with her hands extended; and, inflicting a kiss on both Mrs. Woodby's cheeks, she exclaimed, "Well, my dear Woodby, here I am at last! I thought we should never get here." Then, turning to her follower, she said, "Let me introduce Miss Swallow;" then, unmindful of her friend, she said to the said follower, "Here, Swallow, take the dog; you had better see it washed and combed, and get it a chicken, for it's dying of hunger. Then turning to her friend again, she said, as she looked about her, "This is a charming room;" and looking at the furniture, added, "and what very handsome silk!"

"I'm glad you like it—I was sure you would," said Mrs. Woodby; "it cost us fifteen shillings a yard, and is quite new."

"New! to be sure it is," said Lady Thomson; "but why is it new—don't you always sit in this room?"

"No, never except we have company," said Mrs. Woodby, quite exulting.

"There you're wrong, Woodby," said her friend; "it's quite vulgar not to sit in your best room;—nothing so vulgar as a new thing, and particularly new furniture. I do believe you never sat upon this sofa before!" Upon which she bestowed herself upon its soft cushions with a considerable concussion, and then looked about her with so criticising an eye that it made poor Mrs. Woodby wince with apprehension.

"Now, what are all those chairs doing against the wall," she continued, "like so many raw recruits in a row? They ought to be spread about the room to sit in, to be sure. Then you ought to group your tables,—not one great round thing in the middle, like a room in an inn. And where are your books, your drawings, your albums? You look for all the world now as if you had dropped from the skies, like Eve in paradise! Then those glass things—what do you call them?—upon the chimney-piece—they won't do, indeed they won't; such trash is quite out. You must have old vases or some of the fashionable crooked candlesticks: I'll sell you mine a bargain." Then jumping up as if she were inspired, she flew about the room, and pulling the chairs from their places, the tables from their corners, she managed to bring them all in a

cluster into the middle, and produced so utter a confusion, that, notwithstanding her love of Lady Thomson and her desire to be in the fashion, Mrs. Woodby fairly stood aghast at this destruction of what, from her earliest youth, she had always been taught to esteem as the height of gentility.

"There, that's the sort of thing," said Lady Thomson; "none of your stiffness—every thing must be free and easy."

"Free and easy with a vengeance!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodby between her teeth, and scarcely recovering from the shock which her old prejudices had received.

"But where is Anne—where is Ellen," said Lady Thomson, "and Mr. Woodby? Do they know that I am come?"

"I'll call them," said her friend; and she was just about to ring the bell, when in rushed Anne, followed by her sister, dressed in the smartest of morning dresses, and looking quite the pictures of rude health and vulgar satisfaction.

"My dear Anne," said Lady Thomson, before she kissed her, and looking straight into her face with a scrutinising air, "what do I see on your nose? That must not be: have you no sticking-plaister? If you are intended to be seen, let us have none of this: you know Lord Demone is to be here to-morrow. And Ellen, too,—my dear, why do you flatten your hair down in that fashion over your forehead? If you had a Pasta face, I would say nothing; but ringlets always go with dimples: mind, that's the rule."

"I thought," said Mrs. Woodby, somewhat recovered from her late shock, "that Lord Demone was to have come with you. We are all ready for him: his sheets are well aired, and so is his bed."

"I thought it right," said Lady Thomson, in a tone of dignity and somewhat of mystery, "not to travel in the same carriage with Lord Demone: it is a duty I owe to myself not to travel with him. He will be here to-morrow."

Every body has some sort of rule by which they pretend to shape their conduct in life. Lady Thomson's universal dictum for every thing she did was given in the following form of words:—'I owe it to myself'—or 'it is a duty which I owe to myself'—or 'in justice to my own self,'—thus raising a debt which, in her prodigality of duty, she was heaping upon her own head; but at the same time like a wise

financier, creating a sinking-fund of self-will, which enabled her to clear the debt whenever she pleased. In the present instance, the application of this rule of conduct happened to be well adapted to existing circumstances, inasmuch as the lady was about forty-five, and the gentleman above fifty years of age; but it also was a principle which she applied as a vindication of every folly, and of every act of egotism. As an instance both of her egotism, and of the application of her rule, we will state that she had not sat long with her friends ere she informed them that, in addition to Lord Demone, she had invited another of her friends to Belvedere besides Miss Swallow, her companion, whose presence had not been contemplated—one, be it said, of those many idle and insignificant danglers, whom it was pleasant to her vanity to have appended to her suite, and of whose arrival up to this moment she had not given the smallest intimation. Mrs. Woodby was rather startled at this piece of intelligence, and began to show evident symptoms of that sort of infirmity called 'the fidgets,' which is common to anxious housekeepers. "I wish you had told me of this before," said Mrs. Woodby, "for then I might have given him the blue room: pray who may he be?"

"My dear," said Lady Thomson, nothing abashed at the inconvenience which she had evidently occasioned, "it is a duty I owe to myself, go where I will, to see the best society: I always do it—I lay it down as a rule. Mr. Simpleton Sharp is the gentleman I have invited: he is a particular friend of Lord Demone, and indeed he never goes any where without him; he is very much the fashion, and is quite indispensable in every genteel thing—at Cheltenham. I am sure you will like him—every body likes him: he plays better at whist than most people, and is first cousin to the great Mr. Simpleton of Yorkshire."

After this eulogium, of course Mrs. and the Miss Woodbys could not be otherwise than highly impatient to become acquainted with so accomplished a person and make so desirable an acquaintance; and as both he and Lord Demone are soon to be brought more intimately to the reader's notice, we must say a few words concerning them by way of introduction.

Lord Demone was an Irish peer, the owner of an ancient castle situated in one of the most peaceable counties of Ireland, in which almost every place begins with the syllable Kil, surrounded by a park which once had been flourishing, but which, alas! was so no more; for his revenues, which

once had also been flourishing, alas! also, were so no more. His object was to increase them by marriage; and having found in Lady Thomson a person willing to further this scheme, he attached himself to her during a season at Cheltenham, and fixed upon Anne Woodby as his victim. He had been a sensualist, commonly called a *bon vivant*, all his life; had ever shown himself the most generous and liberal of men by refusing himself nothing; and was every where received with open arms, because he was a wit, and one who excited laughter. In age he was past fifty; his person was without attraction, for he was rather slovenly in his dress, and totally divested of any of the pretensions of a coxcomb. He had a keen eye, and his smile, which never condescended to roar into laughter, expressed much of the comicality of a wag, mixed up with a sufficient quantum of the bitterness of satire.

Mr. Simpleton Sharp, on the other hand, was quite a different person. He was young, had round red cheeks and a white forehead; plump in his person; dressed with the most studied precision; and exhibited in his manner such vivid self-approbation, that every one who approached him longed to slap his face. His unmeaning countenance was a true index of his mind, which never generated an idea of its own, but, like the boa after a meal, would ruminate long and sluggishly upon the good things he had taken in, and then after a lengthened digestion turn them to his own advantage. His ambition was to be thought a wit, and he had attached himself to Lord Demone with a view of catching by reflection some of the brightness that surrounded him, aping his mode of speech and repeating his stories, and occasionally becoming the butt at which the wit levelled his shafts. Lord Demone's manner was irresistibly comic, and his face was always curling up into incipient mirth, like the cover of a pot, which just lifted up by the steam from the boiling liquid, discovers that there are good things within; whilst Simpleton Sharp looked like one who is ever on the point of bringing forth a good thing without actually being known to have a safe delivery, or as a man about to sneeze who stops short with an unrealised spasm.

The day of their arrival was the one pitched upon for the dinner to which the Allnutts had been invited, and great was the stir produced in the house in consequence of this event. Lord and Lady Thorofield, the grandees of the neighbourhood, for the first time were expected, besides others of distinction in the county, and nothing was left

undone to make Lady Thomson and her friend pleased with their reception. The servants at an early hour thronged the passages to the dining-room, running against each other in the eagerness of preparation, and, unpractised in their vocation, 'spoilt more than they mended.' The din in the kitchen was great, and portended a result of singular production. Mrs. Woodby during the progress of the operations would every now and then steal down to those regions of roasting and boiling, and hold mysterious conferences with the cook; whilst Mr. Woodby busied himself in the cellar. The young ladies mean while were in constant communication with their wardrobe and their maid, devising the most effectual mode of setting off their persons, of fascinating their male guests, and of conciliating Lady Thomson.

CHAPTER XI.

One of the best standards for good breeding is the common process of eating and drinking.

We believe that no people in the world are more afflicted with shyness than the English. Whatever may be the cause,—whether it be from nervous apprehension, or pride, or from any other reason,—true it is that its effects are most inconvenient. Some it apparently places in hostility with their fellows, at one time causing them to shun their presence as if they fled from the plague, at another to meet them with trembling and perturbation. Others, casting a veil over the finest qualities of the heart and understanding, it makes them appear like fools and idiots, and they commit acts that belong only to fatuity; whilst others again, who yield in despair to its influence, it leads to put on the face of boldness and effrontery, the mind being so disturbed by its infirmity that it totally for the moment destroys the real character and exhibits one entirely artificial.

The Allnutts were all, more or less, constitutionally shy; and their seclusion from society had given them no habits of controlling their emotions. A charitable observer would have remarked, that in the midst of their awkwardness they possessed the foundation of the most polished man-

ners,—namely, the greatest benignity of mind, a disposition to think well of all people, and a total absence of selfishness; but in the circle to which they were going, it will be seen that their simplicity was laughed at and their good qualities overlooked.

The carriage, driven by honest Brown, just drove up to the door of Belvidere Hall as Abel, in the face of an assembled row of servants, was puzzling and shuffling over the simple operation of taking off his dirty shoes and putting on his dress-ones; and when, hot and perplexed by the exertion, he looked up and beheld his sisters, he was relieved and overjoyed. They soon joined him, and then with silent trepidation prepared themselves to encounter the first awful entrance into the drawing-room. Aunt Bab smoothed herself down, assumed an air of resolution, and taking Abel's arm, headed the column; Aunt Fanny, giving a twist to her curls, threw a glance over her tucker, and a look to her feet, and then received under her arm the hand of the timid Mary, who would willingly have retreated from the ordeal to which she felt that they were about to be exposed. The doors were thrown wide open: with their eyes suffused with agitation, and their senses almost in abeyance, they entered into the splendid apartment, where, lo! like a ship turning at once from a ruffled sea into a calm bay, their fears and apprehensions were quieted as if by magic, for no one was there—the place was untenanted, and instead of the visions of new and unknown faces which they were about to encounter, they merely saw the place "where the pasty was not." They had in fact, arrived half an hour before their time.

This reprieve immediately restored them to their self-possession, and still scarcely venturing to speak louder than in a whisper, they eyed with admiration the magnificence of the room and the beauty of the furniture. They had sat there some time, when in walked one whom we have already described as Mr. Simpleton Sharp, who taking Aunt Bab for Mrs. Goold Woodby, (not having yet been presented to his hostess,) stepped up to her rather with a protecting air, though still with a most urbane manner, said, "How much he was obliged to Lady Thomson for having been the means of affording him the pleasure of making her acquaintance."

Aunt Bab, who was not prepared for this, and not exactly seeing the mistake, speaking in the name of the fami-

ly, said, "We have not the honour of knowing Lady Thomson yet—we are just arrived."

"I beg you a thousand pardons," said the other; "I took you for Mrs. Goold Woodby. I hope that I have given no offence."

"Our name is Allnutt," said Babb: "there can be no offence where none is meant."

"Ah, Allnutt—Woodby,—ha, very good—very rural," said Simpleton Sharp with his mouth wide open, endeavouring to combine something in his shallow intellect which might pass for wit: but nothing obeyed his call save certain abortive hums and hahs, until Mr. and Mrs. Goold Woodby together entered the room. They looked both hot and contentious, for they had in truth scarcely recovered from a very vivacious argument which they had just held respecting the right of precedence between Lady Thomson and Lady Thorofield. Mrs. Woodby, being but indifferently versed in court matters, contended for her friend Lady Thomson, whom she invoked as the first lady at Cheltenham, and one who was looked up to as the first of her sex: whilst Mr. Woodby in vain asserted that Lady Thorofield was a peeress of the realm, and that she had as much right to walk out of a room first as a bishop has to make his exit before a dean.

As soon as they had properly greeted their guests and made acquaintance with Mr. Simpleton Sharp, their argument was renewed, both endeavouring to secure an authority for their respective opinions. Simpleton Sharp, who was conversant in such like discussions, of course at once decided the controversy in favour of Mr. Woodby; but Mrs. Woodby still persevered in endeavouring to procure the approbation of her own sex. "I should like to know," she exclaimed in the height of her enthusiasm for her friend,—"I should like to know who Lady Thorofield was? Why, isn't she the daughter of old Grimes, the former lord's agent, whose wife was a Tapps,—one of the Tappses of the Hare and Hounds on the London Road, and one of a family, if people speak truth, the son of whom was transported for poaching. I should like to know why she should be better than Lady Thomson?"

She was cut short in her argument by the appearance of Lady Thomson herself, who came sweeping in, in all the dignity of a velvet gown and a cap of no ordinary dimensions. The proper introductions immediately ensued; and as Mrs. Woodby had already duly apprised Lady Thom-

son that the Allnutts were related to Lord Knutsford, and as Lady Thomson felt unbounded respect for every thing that had the most distant reference to nobility, she did not fail to pay them marked attention; although in glancing her eye over their dress and appearance, she could not refrain from drawing conclusions upon that head which the worldly and vulgar-minded are too apt to do. The well-clothed neck and throat of Aunt Barbara attracted her attention as much as the bright cherry-coloured silk of Aunt Fanny's gown, which shone throughout the assembled group as bright as the blaze of a blacksmith's fire does amidst the sober-coloured cottages of a village hamlet.

Lord Demone soon after made his appearance; and at the announcement of Lord and Lady Thorofield the dinner was ordered to be served up, when that interval of suspense took place which by no exertion of ingenuity can ever be made agreeable. Simpleton Sharp tried in vain to say something agreeable upon Lady Thompson's lap-dog; Lady Thomson whispered to Lord Demone, who did not cease eyeing each individual assembled with the scrutiny of a satirist; whilst Mr. Woodby had not lost a moment in entertaining Lady Thorofield upon the subject of his lodges, his shields, and the virtues and high qualities of Stone the architect.

As soon as the joyful words of "Dinner is *hon* the table," audibly pronounced by a rustic butler, were heard, the procession gradually proceeded to the scene of action; Mr. Woodby taking the lead with Lady Thorofield, whilst at the same time he threw a look of triumph towards his wife, who was thinking all the while that Lady Thomson was an ill-used woman.

Mrs. Woodby having taken her seat where it is the pride of an English wife to sit—that is, at 'the head of her table,' flanked on either side by dignitaries after her own heart, soon began to dispense her attentions to her guests in those terms of civility which in her estimation were the touch-stone of good breeding. "My lady, pray allow me to assist you to some fish.—My lord, won't you be pleased to play with a sweetbread?—Won't you be 'prevailed' upon to 'try' a kidney?—Mr. Simpleton Sharp, pray be 'induced.'—Miss Barbara Allnutt, I'm afraid there's nothing here that you 'prefer.'—All you see before you, my lord, we do at home: we bake, brew, milk, fish, kill our own mutton and lay our own eggs, all at home—Mr. Goold Woodby will tell you the same."

"I presume that your young ladies are home-made also," said Lord Demone, taking up his glass and looking at Mary Allnutt, with whose beauty he had been particularly smitten, although he would fain have made the mother believe that he talked of her daughters. "You ought not to have forgotten them; they do more credit to your farm than your eggs."

"Indeed, my lord," said the good lady, not seeing the point of his humour, "they have nothing to do with the farm; they have had all the advantages of the genteelest education—we have spared nothing to bring them up in the best principles of perfection:" and then lowering her voice, in a whisper she added, "And Mr. Woodby, there, is quite determined to give them each handsome fortunes. You see they are our only children, besides our son Thomas, and therefore we can afford to do it, and handsomely too."

"But you eat nothing yourself, ma'am," said Lord Thorofield, who was an old sportsman, and who, having been in the field all the morning, was too hungry to say much.

Mrs. Woodby's principal pretensions to gentility, as far as regarded her own person, lay in three things: an ambition to be thought to have a weak stomach, her friendship for Lady Thomson, and her ancient lineage. In answer to Lord Thorofield's accusation of eating nothing, she said, "Ah, my lord, ever since the time of Charles the Second the Goolds have been famous for their bad stomachs;—I am a thorough Goold, and that's the truth of it—I never do eat any thing myself:" and then with a soft sigh added, "And *that* I can't digest."

"Ah, difficulty of digestion, 'tis true, is the general complaint now-a-days," remarked Simpleton Sharp; "'tis said to be the lawyer's complaint—at least it was so when I studied in the Temple."

"There is nothing extraordinary in that," said Demone.

"And wherefore?" said his companion.

"Because more laws are made than can be digested," replied the other.

'Ha! ha! that's very good!" exclaimed Simpleton Sharp; "I never thought of that." Then, turning himself to Lady Thomson, he exclaimed, "There, Lady Thomson, did you hear that? Demone says that Lawyers make more laws than we can digest—is not that excellent?"

"His lordship is always sure to say the best thing at the best time," said Lady Thomson from the other end of the

table, where she had been entertained by Woodby upon some one of his favourite subjects, owing to which propensity the reader has no doubt ere this discovered that he enjoyed the worst of reputations—that of being 'a bore.' This observation of Lady Thomson had stopped the current of his talk; when, turning himself towards the Allnutts, who had for mutual protection seated themselves in a row near each other, addressing Aunt Fanny, who was nearest to him, in a pompous tone of voice, he asked her, "I hope Lord Knutsford was quite well when last you heard from his lordship?"

"We never hear from him," said Aunt Fanny, looking towards her sister to know what she should say; "but I believe he is well."

Woodby then announced to her with a consequential look, as if he were the possessor of state secrets, that there were great rumours of a change of administration; and then added, "I hear that he is to have a seat in the cabinet."

"Is he?" said Fanny, puzzled, and with much hesitation; "I never knew that cabinets were made to sit in!"

This remark, made at a moment when a dead silence had happened to take place in the usual clatter of the dinner, brought the eyes of the whole table upon her, and every sort of smile, from the smile of astonishment to that of derision, might have been remarked upon the faces of most of the company present.

Both Abel and Barbara had frequently felt confused at the ignorance and simplicity which Fanny often betrayed upon the common things of life, although, in truth be it spoken, they themselves were not much more enlightened; but, on this occasion, they were distressed, inasmuch as her remark brought the observation of the whole table upon them all. Lord Demone's scrutiny had fallen more upon the beautiful and unconscious Mary, although, at the same time he could not refrain showing how much he was amused at Aunt Fanny's simplicity. He had heard of country simplicity, but never could believe in its existence; rural seclusion he conceived never could prevail now-a-days to such an extent as to make any one ignorant of the affairs of the world; and the more he remarked her who had so exposed herself and those to whom she was connected, so he was drawn more particularly to scrutinize their manners, and give heed to what they

should say, in the hope of eliciting matter for feeding the springs whence his satire flowed.

"I believe," said Lord Demone, addressing himself to Aunt Barbara,—"I believe that Allnutt is the family name of the title of Knutsford?"

"Yes, it is," said Barbara, happy to withdraw the attention of the table from Fanny, who, however, was not conscious of having committed herself.

"It is a good old Saxon name," said Demone.

"I thought it might have been French," said Simpleton Sharp with as much wisdom as he could throw into his unmeaning face, ringing the changes upon the word.

"It is no more French than your Johnsons and your Thompsons are French," said Lord Demone.

"I hope you will recollect, my lord, that my name is Thomson," said the lady, with a visible change of countenance, and a manner that showed how little she was pleased with his observation.

Lord Demone at once saw that he had involved himself in a dilemma, and, with peculiar quickness, answered, "My dear lady, your name is Thomson, 'tis true; but then it is Thomson without a *p*—that makes all the difference. The Thomsons without a *p* are a totally different people from those who possess that consonant; they are decidedly French—they came over with the Conqueror. Tonson is a real Norman name. The first tonsure, that distinguishing mark in the Catholic Church, was first inflicted in France on a dignitary belonging to that family: besides, surely you recollect the famous French old song of 'Monsieur Tonson,' that you will allow to be decisive in favour of its origin and its antiquity."

These remarks at once soothed the irritated feelings of Lady Thomson; and having, by this short explanation learned more concerning her family than she had ever known before, she was delighted to find that she was so distinguished, and for the future greedily treasured up in her mind that she was a Thomson without a *p*.

"Then who are the Thompsons with a *p*?" inquired Simpleton Sharp. "Is it not strange that there should be so much affinity between the two names?"

"They are vulgar English—pure cockneys. Some savage butcher of Smithfield once beat his son, no doubt, and thence was called Thumpson, or Thompson—there can be no doubt of that etymology."

By the time that this conversation had ended, the first

stage of the dinner had also come to a close, when Mrs. Goold Woodby, still determined to uphold the precedence and privileges of Lady Thomson, bobbed her head to that lady as a signal for departure, and then glancing at Lady Thorofield, all the ladies rose and left the table to the gentlemen, according to the most approved forms of English life.

CHAPTER XII.

A proof that the self-important man and a bore are identified.

As soon as the door had been closed upon the last petticoat, Woodby, still full of the subject which had been under discussion,—that is, the derivation of surnames,—and taking his seat at the head of the table, continued to dwell upon it; for it was one of those upon which he was always ready to say much. First, he narrated the oftentimes-repeated history of his own name, entering into all the various reasons which had caused him to change it, until his guests audibly yawned their desire for a change of subject; then, with great self-complacency, he gave a full account of his wife's name and lineage, until at length he glided into the history of the Goold arms and motto. Addressing himself particularly to Lord Demone, he said, "I possess the very coat of arms that was granted to my wife's ancestor, Sir Jugg Goold, and which hung as a sign over his door, according to the fashion of those days, denoting that he was the king's goldsmith." Then pointing to a dark painting handsomely framed, which hung over the chimney-piece, he added, "There—that is the very sign itself!—there you will see the arms granted by Charles the Second, a hand wielding a hammer, being, as you may observe, an indication or illustration of his art; and underneath the very appropriate motto *Aurum quam bonum*, which in the Latin language means 'Gold is good; a delicate mode of his majesty's of that day to denote that he at once applauded and approved of Goold the goldsmith and gold the metal." Then taking up a candle, he drew

Lord Demone and his other hearers to the inspection of the painting.

Demone's face had long been portentous of wicked intentions. Oppressed by the intensity of the bore, groaning with inward anguish, and watching his first opportunity for revenge, he looked about for some instrument which he might use with advantage. Reading the motto under the shield, he remarked, "Ah, *Aurum quam bonum!* 'Gold is good!'—very happy indeed; but I don't think that was the intended mode of spelling the word *bonum*. In those days, *bonum* was spelt with an *r*." Then approaching the candle, he said, "Ah, and so it was!—there you can see that the original *r* has been scratched out, and an *n* substituted. I thought there must have been something more than met the eye: the Merry Monarch intended to say 'Goold is a bore,' that was his object—he despised riches, and thought his goldsmith an ass.

Woodby felt sensibly distressed, although he would fain have made it believed that he too relished the joke. Those who understood the allusion could scarcely suppress the impulse of their merriment; whilst Simpleton Sharp, whose slow intellect had not compassed the full meaning of Demone's sarcasm, thought he had originated a very shrewd observation, when he remarked that this was an age for improvement, and that great progress had been made in orthography since the Restoration.

It was observed that until after Lord Demone had taken his departure, Mr. Woodby never reverted to the Goold shield and motto; for the new interpretation put upon it, which he felt might implicate his dignity, so entirely stopped the flow of his unceasing dissertations upon himself and his affairs, that it was remarked he had never been so agreeable as on that night.

Upon the return of the gentlemen into the drawing-room, they found the ladies engrossed in looking at some drawings, and in the highest admiration of their excellence; all excepting Lady Thomson, who sat aloof talking with Mrs. Woodby. Miss Woodby had been explaining to Aunt Barbara, whilst Mary was listening with great attention, and the fair Ellen seated near at hand, that these drawings were the performance of Edward Manby, who no sooner had been invited to contribute something to be disposed of for charitable purposes at the ensuing bazaar, than he sent the present beautiful productions.

"And pray tell us who is Edward Manby?" said Aunt

Barbara to Mr. Woodby as soon as he appeared. "He seems to be a very clever young man."

"Edward Manby," said Woodby, taking up a pompous and protecting tone, "is a very good young man—indeed I may say that he is a remarkably clever young man and deserves to be encouraged. He is a poor youth without parents—an orphan in fact, if I may be allowed the expression, with whom my son Tom got acquainted at college, and to whom I have been able to be of some little service. He has an uncle at Liverpool, a very respectable man, a brewer of some eminence, who educates him, and he is now at college. His father was an officer in the army, and died in the West Indies; he was brother to the brewer in question; and his mother, who was a well-born woman—at least so I have heard, for I don't know her family,—died there also. His parents left no property whatever; so Edward is totally dependant on his uncle's generosity, who having a large family of his own, it is not likely he will ever have any other patrimony than his wits, for I hear his mothers family will have nothing to say to him. He comes here occasionally to see us from Liverpool when Tom is at home; and my girls have, you see, got him to draw for our bazaar, and these are his drawings."

Having satisfied Barbara's curiosity, he then walked away to some other part of the room, and left her surrounded by Fanny, Mary, and the two Miss Woodbys, to pursue the subject upon which they were engrossed. Edward's beauty, the first of merits in the eyes of all women, was first discussed. The young ladies described his features one by one,—the outline of his face, the conformation of his nose, the length and breadth of his cheeks, chin and lips, and that very principal object of discussion, his eyes: then they talked of the colour of his hair and the brilliancy of his teeth, and, in short, gave so minute a description of his person, that it was evident he had made no common impression upon their memories. They talked long and enthusiastically of his perfections; compared him to each of their male acquaintance; deplored his poverty; but boldly asserted that nothing could prevent him from becoming the Lord Chancellor should he choose the law as his profession, or the Archbishop of Canterbury were he to go into the church. These observations sunk deep into Mary's mind; Ellen sighed and looked like a desponding shepherdess; whilst Aunt Barbara, taking a more matter-of-fact view of his circumstances, suggested that he

ought to be recommended to turn his views to business, making no doubt that, with his great abilities, he would in time turn out to be a very great brewer.

Lord Demone meanwhile, whether, with a desire of eliciting amusement from Aunt Fanny's simplicity, or through her to become acquainted with Mary, approached the more confirmed spinster and entered into conversation with her. She was flattered by his attention, and calling up one of those looks which in her best days would have inflamed every heart, she began to hope that her air and her cherry-coloured gown had done their duty. He acquired her good will and confidence by talking to her with great eagerness upon those airy nothings so usually discussed upon a first acquaintance; and so effectually did he impress her with the certainty of his being in earnest, that she was not long in persuading herself that her eyes had not lost their power. She therefore answered him with bestowing the aforementioned glance, which, old and practised as he was in the amiable weaknesses of the softer sex, he soon subtracted from the amount of simplicity which he had expected to find in her character. He soon said enough to make her believe that he was struck with her appearance, and then descanted in general terms upon beauty, upon country beauties, upon the comparative charms of the beauties of that part of the country, and at last upon the positive beauty of her niece, who, unconscious of what was passing, sat listening to the conversation upon Edward Manby with the attention of a child intent upon a story.

"Yes," said Fanny, rather disconcerted at the digression from herself to her niece,—"Yes, John thinks her handsome, and so do we; but then we are partial. He is decidedly handsome, and there is a strong family likeness among us all."

"No doubt," said Demone,—"no doubt," looking significantly in her face: "he must be handsome if he is like those I have the pleasure of knowing. But pray, who is John?"

"Oh, don't you know," said Fanny in a tone of surprise, —"dont't you know John! He is my brother, and Mary's father." Upon which she gave him a full account of his history, of his present views and undertakings, and of his future expectations. In proportion as she proceeded in

her narrative, so did her confidence in her hearer increase; for he listened to her with the most well-bred attention, and so interested did he appear in all the various details of the family—of what Mary could do and what she could not do—of what Abel had suffered when he was a boy, and of his various infirmities now that he was a man—of Barbara's knowledge of housekeeping—all mixed up in the most amusing medley which a mind not regulated by logic could produce, that his entertainment increased with the involutions of her narrative. Her aim had been to give him a high idea of John's abilities; which she did by narrating, with all the fidelity in her power, the various schemes which he had put into practice to make his fortune, but which had ended in his ruin; and she had so well conducted her disclosures, that she ended by convincing her hearer that John was the very reverse of what she had been endeavouring to prove,—that is, instead of being a very wise man, that he was a very foolish one.

When Lady Thomson observed how much Lord Demone was feasting his eyes upon Mary's beauty, and that he was about attaching himself to her for the evening, by a sapient manœuvre she threw herself forward, and making a few prefatory speeches upon the delights of music, soon engaged all parties to supplicate Miss Mary Allnutt for a song. In this request Demone earnestly joined, followed by Simpleton Sharp, and backed by the ponderous Woodby, who, though he had about as much knowledge of music as he might have of astrology, thought it uncivil and inhospitable not to urge his timid guest to do that which she declared was disagreeable to herself.

In vain poor Mary looked alarmed and full of distress—in vain she turned with a beseeching air to her Uncle Abel, her refuge in all cases; more dead than alive, she was dragged to the piano-forte, and there stood turning over the leaves of her music-book, whilst blushes suffused her cheeks and her temples throbbed with apprehension. Aunt Fanny, in order to give her encouragement, offered to accompany her; and the time which she took in taking off her gloves, squaring her elbows, adjusting her feet, and striking a few antiquechords, gave Mary leisure to reason herself out of her timidity, and afterwards to sing one of her least pretending songs; and this she did with an expression so full of pathos and simplicity, that all hearts were soon enlisted on her side. The Miss Woodbys fol-

lowed, with an air of superiority that seemed to say, "Now you shall hear something like Music!" Miss Anne struck two or three sound blows on the instrument by way of a fair start; and then she and her sister engaged their voices in a tortuous Italian duo, so full of involution, each part being so nicely poised by science, that if one voice did not immediately respond or take up the other, all went wrong; a piece of music, in fact, which would have required all the nicety of tact and skill of professed singers to overcome the difficulties which it presented. The adventurous sisters, however, set off, without any apprehentions as to the result—they plunged at once into the thickest of the dilemma, and then having thoroughly engaged in a sort of file-fireing of *ti amo — mio sposo*, and of *mio sposo—ti amo*, they finished by entangling themselves therein so effectually, that what was intended to be sung together was sung separately, and what was meant to be sung separately was sung together and produced consequences which ended in an utter confusion of sounds. Miss Ellen, at the top of her voice, false by excess of exertion, got to the last note of her finale a full minute before Miss Anne, who, nothing abashed at having been so much outrun, thought that she made all straight by the grand succession of closing thumps which she struck upon her instrument with a great air of bravado.

The enraptured mother, who conceived that the more noise her daughters made the better they sung, went about seeking for congratulations upon their superior talent, and hinted again to Lord Demone that she had spared no expense to bring them up in the first style; and she whispered to him with an air of confidence, that as Anne always ate hearty, it was not fair to judge of her singing upon a full stomach; but that if he should ever happen to hear her before her meals she would astonish him.

Lord Demone said, he made no doubt that she would, and hoped that he might be informed whenever that event should happen; but that he begged leave to say that he was very well pleased with what he had heard, for that he was fond of a *full* voice, which, he presumed, proceeded from a *full* stomach.

Simpleton Sharp, who was at hand, and ever ready to laugh whenever his lordship opened his mouth, echoed this attempt at a joke far and wide, to the great mortification of Aunt Fanny, who was languishing under the expecta-

tion of being asked to perform, which she visibly made known by the sort of singing face singers are apt to get up on such occasions, and which she did too significantly to be mistaken. Lord Demone was the first to understand the drtft of her machinations, and immediately pressed her to begin. Before any one but himself was prepared for the outbreak, she began, in powerful accents, to chant, "Shepherds I have lost my love," and thereby restored every one to that state of silent attention which is generally produced by a woman's voice, but which was broken by certain occasional titters excited by the richness of the exhibition. Aunt Fanny's calls for her love were totally disregarded; and by the time she reached the closing stanza, which she performed with scrupulous exactitude, her audience had almost forgotten that she was straining her throat for their amusement, and, excepting the well-bred Demone, every one had deserted her, and were proceeding to discussions in which her singing took no share. Her efforts wound up the amusements of the evening; and very soon after she had finished, the Allnutts took their departure, much thanked by the Woodbys, and much lauded, after they were fairly gone, by Lord Demone, and abundantly criticised by Lady Thomson.

CHAPTER XIII.

A sneeze sometimes awakens, so a sudden change of subject produces variety. A letter from John Allnutt.

The visit to Belvedere afforded matter of conversation to the inhabitants of Ivycote for many days after it had taken place. Aunt Fanny had been particularly gratified, for she could not refrain from encouraging a secret hope that she had made a conquest of Lord Demone; whilst Mary, on the contrary, felt as great a loathing when she reflected how much she had been an object of his observa-

tion. Aunt Barbara was glad to find that they had got so well over it; and Abel, who had scarcely been noticed by any one, said little, but thought much.

Lord Demone had intimated to Fanny his intention of soon paying them a visit, and she was in daily expectation of that occurrence, when one morning, instead of his lordship, appeared the postman, bearing a letter, which was soon recognised to come from John. This happy event collected all the family together; and Mary, to whom it was addressed, showed, by the sparkling of her eyes and the agitation of her manner, how much her feelings were interested at this instance of her father's affection. As we do not wish the reader to lose sight of this member of the family, we will not apologise for giving his letter at full length. It was dated from Madeira; and after Abel had settled the geography of that island for the satisfaction of his sisters, and having received permission from Mary to read the letter aloud, he began as follows:—

"My dearest Mary,

"You will be glad to hear that I arrived quite safe at this place a few days ago, after a passage more full of incident and adventure than I could possibly have expected. We left Liverpool with a fair and steady breeze, which lasted for two days, during which time I had all the leisure to to think of you and your dear aunts and uncle at Ivycote, as well as to get acquainted with my ship, which I found to be an excellent sailer; and indeed I think, if the owner had adopted my suggestions in making certain alterations, she would have been unrivalled. On the third day it began to blow. As we entered the Bay of Biscay the sea was very rough, which caused the ship to labour a great deal, obliging us to take a reef in our topsails; which is an operation that I need not describe, fearing it may not be intelligible to a lady,—but it is more like making a tuck in a gown than any thing else which I can at present think of. The next day we were seated at dinner in the cabin, when the mate rushed in with terror in his looks, saying, 'Sir, the bob-stay is carried away!' Now, you may perhaps suppose that *bob-stay* might be a man, and might already begin to deplore his untimely end; but be not alarmed—it is only a piece of iron which secures the bowsprit, and acts in some manner as a martingale upon a horse's head, and keeps it steady. I think that I have hit upon a new

method of making bob-stays, which will save the country a great deal of money, and shall send my views upon the subject to the Admiralty by the first opportunity. We were obliged to bear up for Rochelle, which was the nearest port, in order to repair our damage; and we reached an anchorage at the mouth of the Garonne, where we managed to secure our bowsprit. During our stay there I landed and was shown a great curiosity—it was the last house Bonaparte inhabited in France previously to his embarkation to place himself in our hands. It struck me that a good speculation might be made in purchasing this house and transporting it to London, there to be erected and shown to the people of England. I was about striking a bargain for it during this my short stay in France, but was hurried away before I could accomplish it: however, I will keep it in mind as a good thing to do on some future occasion.

"We sailed again, and coasting the high lands of Portugal, shaped our course for Madeira, where we anchored in Funchal roads without further accident. I was introduced to the Portuguese governor——"

"The Portuguese governor!" exclaimed Aunt Barbara: "John must be wrong there. What have the Portuguese to do with Madeira—surely it belongs to us?"

"I believe you will find that John is right," remarked Abel very quietly. "Madeira has always belonged to Portugal."

"It stands to reason that it does not," retorted Barbara: "for don't all our consumptive patients go to Madeira?—no foreigners would allow that surely. You might as well say that those who die in the next parish have a right to bury their dead in our church yard. It stands to reason that I'm right."

Abel continued to read.

"—I was introduced to the Portuguese governor, to whom I communicated a plan for new paving and lighting the streets of Funchal, and introducing the use of rail-roads, by which the inhabitants might ascend and descend their steep mountain without the risk of breaking their necks, riding on mules, as they do. But he appeared to be an enemy to innovation, and when I left him, I determined to propose that the people should appoint a committee to conduct their own affairs: whether they will adopt my plans time will show, for I fear that I shall not remain long

enough among them to renovate their island. I must reserve my exertions for Mexico and South America in general, where I hope to introduce so many improvements, that the face of that great country will be totally changed ere many years elapse. What with new constitutions, new roads, gas-works, steam-engines, schools, and newspapers, I trust to introduce so much more happiness at a great deal cheaper rate than any happiness they have hitherto enjoyed, that life will be a blessing to them, instead of the contrary, which it must now be.

"Although I am extremely impatient to be at my post, yet I am inclined to be less so when I consider that I have been the means of placing your uncle and aunts in better circumstances than they were before. By this time I calculate that they must be in possession of their new revenue; and if matters go on as prosperously as I expect they will in Mexico, I hope to realise so much wealth, that you, my dear child, as well as they, will be able to live in affluence during the rest of your lives. This letter I wish to contain all that I have to say to them as well as to yourself; and let me hope that after I have properly exerted myself for the benefit of mankind, I may return to you to give you my blessing before you settle in life, and which I now do from afar with all the affection and sincerity of your own father and friend,

"JOHN ALLNUTT."

Mary was affected to tears at the perusal of this letter: her affection for her father was unbounded; and although she was surrounded by those who loved her as parents and acted towards her as such, yet what is there that can stand in competition with a father's love? They sat long in discussion upon the contents of the letter, for it brought John before them in every line and every circumstance which it contained. There he was, with his ardent and ill-regulated benevolence of character, sailing on the surface of the globe, making plans and sketching constitutions, as if upon himself alone had devolved the duty of civilizing a new world. Aunt Barbara, notwithstanding his repeated failures in former schemes, still placed implicit confidence in his abilities; and now that she was in the actual enjoyment of one of his suggestions, which had produced an increase of revenue, she willingly lent herself to the hope that he was about to put into practice all that he promised, and that ere long he would return to Eng-

land one of the wealthiest men of his time. Abel's enthusiasm did not run so high; but he also, seeing how regularly the increased dividends on their funds were paid, was more confirmed in his opinion of John's sagacity than he had ever been before. As for Fanny, she looked upon her absent brother as something greater than either Bonaparte, the Duke of Wellington, or the lord-lieutenant of the county, so highly did she appreciate the blessings of being able to wear cherry-coloured silk-gowns, and of being driven about by a coachman with a gold-laced hatband and gold-laced button-holes.

They had scarcely finished the perusal of John's letter when visitors were announced. Peeping from a corner, they perceived them to be Lord Demone and Simpleton Sharp, escorted by Mr. Woodby. In the twinkling of an eye, up ran Aunt Fanny into her bed-room to put on a more becoming dress, and away flew Barbara into the kitchen to prepare refreshments.

Abel and Mary remained below to receive their guests; which they did with appropriate speeches of welcome. Lord Demone was almost struck dumb by the dazzling beauty of Mary's face and person, and the uncommon grace of her manner; Simpleton Sharp remarked with singular presence of mind, that the name of the cottage answered precisely to its picturesque appearance; and Woodby strutted about as a turkeycock is frequently seen to do in the presence of minor fowls, as if he, personifying Belvedere Hall, that great mansion, was asserting its pre-eminence over the humble and diminutive Ivycote. Aunt Barbara very soon after came bustling in, with welcome and sandwiches beaming in her countenance; and at length Fanny appeared in all the exuberance of dangling curls and streaming ribands. Aunt Fanny soon took possession of Demone as of a commodity peculiarly her own, (although he willingly would have continued to gaze upon the lovely Mary,) and invited him to take a walk over their grounds, for so she called an acre and a half of lawn and shrubbery. She directed his attention to the various points of view; how he could see the parlour window of the house through one opening in the trees,—then how beautifully the kitchen chimney mantled with ivy peeped over a thick tuft of laurels; and at length she brought him by slow degrees to their great lion, their most famous point, the parsonage-house, with the village-steeple peering over it, backed by

the low range of the Huckaback Hills, whilst the light blue smoke from the blacksmith's shop curled up in the midst. At each stoppage Aunt Fanny made a speech, to which Demone answered by the usual exclamations; then taking him into the centre of the lawn, she said, "And here I shall want you to give me your advice; — I ask it from every one of our friends, and I will ask it therefore of you. Do you advise us to plant this lawn in *quidnuncs* or not?"

"In *quidnuncs!*" screamed Demone, scarcely able to suppress a burst of laughter. "Oh no, by no means!— root them out rather. No, no; never allow a quidnunc to take root, not even in your village, much less so near your house!"

Fanny was surprised at this singular burst of hatred against what in her mind she conceived to be a very innocent mode of putting five trees together, and more particularly at the merry manner in which that passion developed itself in her companion. However, she said nothing more on the subject, but determined to treasure up Lord Demone's opinion in order to bring it forward whenever the question should be brought under discussion in the family. She then led him to what in cottage grandiloquence she called the conservatory, consisting of an enclosure half green paint, half green glass, in which a few red pots were preserved, containing little half-inches of plants, with names tacked to them that would have puzzled Sanchoniathon himself to explain.

Having shown him all these things, they returned to the house, where they found Aunt Barbara's collation duly spread, and making a most striking contrast by the excellence and plenty of its materials to a similar meal on record as given at Belvedere Hall.

"Well," said Fanny as soon as she entered the room, unable to retain her first resolution, "do not you know that Lord Demone, is all against the *quidnuncs:* he says they won't do."

"*Quincunx*, Fanny," said Abel in a suppressed tone of voice.

"*Quincunx* or *quidnuncs*," answered Fanny, "I suppose it's all the same: but, in short, his lordship hates them so much that he would not allow one to be planted within fifty miles of the village."

"I do not like quidnuncs," said Demone; "I won't say as much for quincunx: I approve every thing which Miss

Fanny Allnutt approves,—there can be no appeal from her taste."

Fanny, losing sight of her ridiculous mistake in the glory of receiving so flattering a speech, felt a glow and a joy all over her person which gave her the vivacity of sixteen, and she bounded about with those large feet of hers in a manner that showed how much the nerves of the heart are connected with those of the lower extremities. Nothing could be more ludicrous than the scene which took place between these two individuals; and Demone appeared willing to carry it on further, had he not been stopped by the dense Woodby, who had undertaken to give the history of the three Miss Popkins, ladies of great wealth, the possessors of a fine modern house in the neighbourhood, and who consequently were the theme of speculation throughout the country.

"These Miss Popkins," said Woodby with great emphasis, "were coheiresses—that is to say, they cannot be called coheiresses because there are three of them; however for shortness, sake we will call them such. They inherited from their father after they had lost their mother, who was herself a coheiress with her brother, a rich merchant at Liverpool, who is looked upon as their uncle, which indeed he is on their mother's side. They are the sole possessors of his wealth—that is to say, divided into three equal parts, of which by far the largest, if I may so say, will be that of the youngest Miss Charlotte Popkin, who is not yet of age, and who, by the bye, I have my eye upon for my son Tom; and, let me add, I have recommended Edward Manby to make himself agreeable to the two elder ones, for he might marry one or either of them —at least he shall have all my influence, poor fellow,—and that is not small, let me tell you, for after all Belvedere Hall tells in this part of the country; don't you think so, Miss Barbara?" said he, abrubtly addressing that lady, and who was at that moment planning a new plate of sandwiches.

"I beg your pardon," said Barbara, very civilly; "what did you say?"

"I was saying," said Woodby, "that Belvedere Hall, without flattery I may say now, tells in this part of the country, particularly now with its new lodges."

"Indeed it does," said Bab, most emphatically: "it is seen at least for two miles off from the back of our church,

and looks remarkably pretty. The lodges, it must be owned, are a great addition—I think you can't have too many of them."

Woodby, forgetting his original idea in the all-engrossing subject of his lodges, which had unintentionally been grafted upon it by Aunt Barbara, proceeded in his usual manner to dilate and remark and exult thereupon; and he would have comprehended the double shields containing the Goold and the Woodby arms, had he not been stopped by the presence of Lord Demone, who, the moment he ventured to touch upon that point, attacked him with so much humour upon the new version which he had given to the motto before alluded to, and threw the whole thing into such utter ridicule, that Woodby never more ventured in his presence to say a word upon it.

And it was remarkable how strong an effect the approach to the subject by Mr. Woodby produced on all those who had heard him speak upon it before. Immediately symptoms of impatience broke out—the averted look, the shuffling feet, the suppressed yawn, all indicated the impending calamity: and, on this occasion, where the very walls of Ivycote were impregnated with Mr. Woodby's long stories, the result produced was a termination of the visit. Lord Demone, taking a last look at Mary, made his bow. Simpleton Sharp, who had been concerting a joke during the whole visit, at length unbosomed himself by saying, "The next coat I have, it shall be green, for then it will put me in mind of Ivycote." He waited to watch the result of this effort of his genius; but finding it had fallen to the ground, he followed his friend, after making many fair speeches, and was at length overtaken by Woodby, who would not allow Aunt Barbara to escape without explaining why it was not suitable, and why it was out of all architectural rule that there should be more than two lodges at any entrance, although sometimes people were mean enough to place only one, as Lord Thorofield for instance.

CHAPTER XIV.

The dullness of the country relieved by intelligence from the world of folly and dissipation.

BELVEDERE HALL, in due course of time, was cleared of its visiters. Lady Thomson's visit had passed off much to her satisfaction, although she had not been able to bring Anne Woodby's marriage to a happy conclusion with Lord Demone. Whether he had been smitten by the superior charms of Mary, or whether Anne still cherished a tender feeling for Captain Swaggle, or whether—which, perhaps, was most probable—Mr. Woodby was averse to coming down with a sum sufficiently alluring to the needy peer, it were useless at present to discuss; but true it is, Demone took his departure without making any proposal, and Lady Thomson returned to Cheltenham, whilst the Woodbys at proper time and season exhibited themselves in London and at the watering-places.

Belvedere Hall remained deserted during the winter and spring; but as the summer approached, all the anticipations of the fancy bazaar and ball which had been so long promised broke out again in the country, and the neighbourhood became anxious for the return of the wealthy owners of that mansion.

The inhabitants of Ivycote passed the winter months in their usual retirement, anticipating a happier summer than the preceding one, grateful to Providence for all the blessings which they enjoyed, and dispensing those blessings to the utmost of their power to their poorer neighbours. They too began to count the days when Belvedere Hall would again be inhabited, for they longed to have an opportunity to afford the gentle Mary some of those gaieties to which they thought she was entitled at her age, but in default of which, such was the excellence and rational cast of her nature, she neither repined nor expressed herself impatient. One morning in the beginning of March, whilst they were at breakfast, the postman delivered a letter directed to Aunt Barbara, bearing upon it the Brighton post-mark, and which was discovered to come from Mrs.

Woodby by the cramped writing on the address. She immediately read it out as follows:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"This is to hope that you are all well, that your winter cough has been mild, and that Mr. Abel is well of his weak chest, as we are at present, thank God. We have been enjoying the breezes here, as they call them, which at present are blowing a hurricane and smashing all our windows one after the other; which is a pity, since we see the king and queen from out of them every day, taking a drive in their coach-and-four and their outriders. We take our hats off and make curtsies to their majesties at least twenty times every day, which is a great privilege; and Mr. Woodby says it is right to show one's loyalty, and he thinks that he is likely to be a great favourite at court, for the king took his hat off to him; and who knows? he expects to get a title—to go down on his knees for a knight: but not a word of that, my dear friend, for that is a secret,—and so is what I'm going to tell you, for you must not let it out in the village, whatever you do. You must know, that every body knows that we are to have our fancy bazaar and ball in the summer; and we have been desired to get up something *nouvelle*, as we say in French, and not one of your humdrum things. Now, my girls and I are of opinion that we ought to draw out the charity-school boys and girls to make a show on the lawn when the company comes: but the thing is, what shall we do with them?—Mr. Dodd, a gentleman here, thinks the boys might all be dressed as sailors, and the girls as their wives: but that, you know, would be low, and some think improper. Now, we have agreed otherwise: Mr. Simpleton Sharp, who is here, has told us that there is nothing so genteel as Roman gods and goddesses; and we want you, please, to tell Mrs. Humphries the schoolmistress, that she is to be Juno or Venus, whichever she likes; and Tim Merriday the schoolmaster, he is to be Jupiter. The boys will be Cupids, and the girls Psyches: that, you know, is just in character. The boys might have wings tacked on to their jackets just behind their shoulders, each with a bow and arrow in hand; and there you have your Cupids. The girl's wings might be stitched on behind their ears on their caps; and there you have your Psyches. Mrs. Humphries, if she be Juno, may have a tiara and a half-moon on her head, and the

peacock close to her,—for that is the way Mr. Simpleton Sharp and the learned represent the queen of the gods: and Merridy, to look like Jupiter, should have a wig over his own hair, which, Mr. Simpleton Sharp says, are called ambrosial curls,—and he might carry a set of fire irons in his hand for his thunderbolts. He ought to have an eagle beside him; but for want of that let him get one of the largest turkey-cocks in the yard, for they do look something like an eagle, and then he would be complete.—Now pray, dear Miss Barbara, do help us. We can get the Cupid and Psyche's wings made up here at about fourpence a-pair, and we will also get the tiara and half-moon; but let Merriday practise the boys and Mrs. Humphries the girls: they may walk in a row backwards and forwards every day on the lawn with the peacock and turkey-cock behind them, and be taught pretty manners, such as Cupids and Psyches no doubt have. But not a word of it in the village—pray mind that, for the whole thing is to be a surprise to the company. My daughters and Mr. Woodby send their love. So no more at present from your sincere friend,

"ANNE GOOLD WOODBY.

"P. S. Tell Merriday, please, that he may twist some flax into long curls, and so make a wig: or if he likes to be Vulcan instead of Jupiter, (for Vulcan, you know, was Venus's husband,—that is, if Mrs. Humphries chooses Venus instead,) he may; and then, instead of the fire-irons, he may carry a sledge-hammer,—for Vulcan, I am creditably informed, was a blacksmith."

Inclosed within this letter was another from Miss Woodby to Aunt Fanny, which the reader will perhaps like to be laid before him, and which ran as follows:

"DEAR MISS FANNY,

"I write in bed, for I have just done dancing at a ball, and take this opportunity of writing a few lines to tell you how we are going on in this gay place, and to make your mouth water about this ball that we went to last night, at a place called the Ship,—although it was not a ship, you know, but a hotel. It was called the Master of Ceremonies' Ball, although there was no ceremony about it that I could see, for the people all crowded in one after the other

as if they did not care a farthing how they got in provided they got in first, and pushed each other about like so many sheep in a pen. It was very good fun, however, for all that; for mamma, in getting through a door, nearly had one of her sleeves dragged off; somebody trod upon papa's foot, which he did not like; and as for Ellen, she was lost full ten minutes before we could find her again. The room was full of marchionesses, duchesses, and great people, and one of those sort of ladies called a 'patroness' was there; but, la! you never saw such a dowdy thing in your life! She was nothing near so smart as Lady Thomson usually is; indeed, I was much finer than she was, for the matter of that: but Lady Thomson would have beat her and every other lady that I saw out and out again. And as for your marchionesses, they are poor creatures with about as much spirit in them as a mouse. There was one standing in the doorway, and I thought I had as much right to stand there as she had, for we all paid alike, so I pushed by her; when she turned round and said, 'I beg your pardon, I am afraid I am in your way,' and she let me pass without shoving me again: now isn't that mean-spirited of her? But oh, my dear friend, who do you think I saw in the crowd in full uniform?—but I won't tell you, although perhaps you may guess: all I can say is, that it was not Lord Demone, odious creature as he is,—but he certainly looked very handsome, that is the truth of it. He had let his hair grow right over his chin, and he had altogether such an air, that when we danced together all the room was looking at us,—and I am quite certain that the patroness I mentioned before was downright jealous of me. He told me that his regiment was doing duty here, and that he would certainly come and see us in his undress, which becomes him very much. You are, I dare say, dying to know who he is; but all I can say at present is, that his name begins with S. I wish I could invite him to our fancy ball, that is to be; but I am afraid of mamma, who wouldn't even allow poor Edward Manby to be invited—but papa insisted upon it, and so did Tom, and so she could not refuse. But I quite forgot to say what I principally wrote about; which is, that the stall that Ellen and I are to preside over at the bazaar is to be called the Beauty Stall; and as it is the fashion to think your niece, Miss Mary, handsome, mamma begs me to ask you to allow her to assist in selling: there will be Charlotte Pop-

kin in addition, who, you know, we are thinking of for Tom, and she will make up our party. And mamma says, if you will have the goodness to preside over the next stall, for ours will be full, you shall have the two other Miss Popkins for your partners. Pray write an answer to this; for when we can find time in this busy, rackety place, we can think of nothing else than our bazaar. With which I remain, my dear Miss Fanny,

"Your affectionate friend,
"ANNE WOODBY.

"P. S. Pray don't tell any body that we call our stall the Beauty Stall, because they would think us conceited, you know; which is a great fault. And, believe me, I asked for you, for I did not think you a bit too old, and you know you have been very handsome; but every body said it would spoil the look of our stall;—so, you know, it was none of my fault. I hope you are hard at work for us: indeed, our principal hope for things, and pincushions, and rugs, and pen-wipers, and so on, is from your house. We shall have the selling of Edward Manby's drawings—which is some comfort."

The perusal of these letters, as may be imagined, gave a new turn to the monotony of life and ideas which existed at Ivycote, and produced a discussion upon their contents and upon their writers which afforded matter for subsequent conversation until the return of the Woodbys to Belvedere. Aunt Barbara, who was purely a matter-of-fact person, whose thoughts never extended beyond the cares of her own family and her own village, who was accustomed to look after the necessities of the poor in the true spirit of charity—that is, rationally, and without the excitement of false sentiment and mawkish sensibility,—was as much astonished by Mrs. Woodby's intention of turning charity-children into playthings, as she would have been averse to making them objects of romantic affection. She had never looked upon them in the mythological point of view in which they were now presented before her, much less could she ever have imagined it possible that the schoolmaster and mistress could ever have been turned into the representatives of Jupiter and Juno. She, therefore, upon the first blush of the question, very decidedly opposed herself to the proposed scheme, and, in her charac-

teristic mode of argument, exclaimed, "that it stood to reason, and she was sure that she was right; that if the boys once began to think themselves Cupids, and the girls Psyches, there would be an end to all discipline among them. The object of their education would thus be defeated; for," she contended, "how would it be possible to persuade Cupids to become carpenters and labouring men? and still more how difficult to turn Psyches into housemaids!"

Uncle Abel, on the other hand, who always pleaded on the good-natured side of the question endeavoured to divert his sister's opposition by saying, "that this circumstance of the fete, perhaps, would only occur once, and that the impression it would leave upon the children's mind could only be transient; whilst the relaxation which it would afford them, their parents, and the whole neighbourhood, would produce a wholesome feeling by drawing the rich and the poor more closely together, and thus establish mutual good-will. That the charity-boys could no more understand what was meant by their being Cupids than the girls by their being Psyches; and that as for Mrs. Humphries and Merriday, their authority would only be strengthened by being elevated to such high dignities."

Aunt Fanny took no share in the discussion, for her mind was entirely absorbed by the contents of Miss Woodby's postscript. It has frequently been remarked, that one of the most fatal gifts that can be given by Nature to woman is beauty, unless it be accompanied by a sound understanding. Poor Fanny had been endowed with the first, but the reader need not be informed that she was deficient in the second. She had been beautiful, she had been much admired, and ranked among the beauties of the county; her short-sighted mind never told her that such a gift was transient and would soon pass away; she had rejected many an offer of marriage, and here she was still Miss Fanny Allnutt, the rejected of the Miss Woodbys and their 'Beauty Stall.' Her first impulse on reading the offensive hint that she was old, was to be angry—very angry; but possessing, as she did, all the meekness, the kind-heartedness, and the forgiving disposition which were the characteristics of her name and family, her secondary feeling was to sit down mortified, it is true, but resigned. As she retired to her bed-room to meditate over the contents of the letter, she could not help taking one long, anxious, scrutinising look at her face and form in the looking-glass,

as if she were determined to try herself before that uncompromising judge. She first peered straight into her eyes—examined those tell-tale wrinkles at the corners, which, diverging into angular lines, were ruled with the precision of an almanack—and then inspected those circular pouches underneath, which contained the register of many a passing year. She found her nose firm and untouched: but as she proceeded to survey her mouth, she started such a covey of little crooked figures, zigzags, crosses and re-crosses, that she became alarmed, and she would willingly have imposed them upon herself as dimples, had they not been too numerous to connive at such a fraud. Her cheeks being streaked with colour and the enamel of her teeth still fresh, she became a little restored to good spirits by their appearance, and she was proceeding with a light heart to the inspection of her hair, when a grey lock, full of evil intentions protruded itself with so conclusive an evidence against her that she almost fainted at the sight. But still, not discouraged, taking a more distant survey of her *tout ensemble*, she found her figure still so good, that at length, with a deep-drawn sigh, she exclaimed, "I'm not so bad after all." Still those fatal words 'too old' haunted her eyesight and her brain as if they had been stereotyped upon them, and she found her philosophy too weak to bear up against the obstinate truth. She continued fixed before her glass for some time, looking, and smiling, and smirking, as if she could recall from its very depths those years which had so soon gone by, and which had taken with them all that beauty, the recollection of which was now the subject of her misery. "At all events," she at length exclaimed by way of soothing her mortified mind,—"At all events, I am better than either of the Miss Popkins—nobody shall say nay to that;" and then turning her glass back from her, she fled from her room and returned to the parlour.

CHAPTER XV.

In modern ethics, 'a fancy bazaar and ball' are added to the several gifts of charity.

It is the peculiar privilege of this species of writing to enjoy an entire command over time and space, whereby people and places are brought together and dispersed again as easily as a child puts together a geographical puzzle, and then breaks it up and packs it into its box. The Goold Woodby family, after having been absent from Belvedere Hall for about six months, returned to it again, renewed in their vanity by having mixed with the heartless world, exercised in envy by aspiring at the possession of things which they could not attain, and indulging in long draughts of hatred against persons at whose hands they had received mortifications. They resumed their position in the country with increased feelings of arrogance and higher ideas of their own importance; for in vulgar minds the reaction which takes place after a mortification is not towards humility, but towards the contrary, as *Fag* in the play, after having been reviled and pushed aside by his master, vents his spleen by kicking the errand-boy.

The day was now fast approaching upon which the long-talked-of fancy bazaar and ball were to take place, and Mrs. and the Miss Goold Woodby's had returned from Brighton and London, laden with all sorts of things fitted to promote the object of the festival. Their first step was to issue their cards of invitation—called, we believe, in stationers' language, elephant cards, on account of their great size,—on which was inscribed the usual formula of words for a ball, but which made a fancy dress an indispensable requisite to the acceptance of the invitation. These cards were accompanied by tickets of admission to the bazaar, which served as hints that there was charity as well as amusement contemplated in the invitation. They were sent far and wide all over the country, and great were the expectations raised. Musicians, cooks and confectioners, and all the concomitants of a fête, were to come from appropriate distances in order to enhance its

merit and the self-devotion of those who gave it; and the ingenuity of every tailor and milliner around was taxed to invent dresses and ornamental costumes.

The bazaar was to take place on the lawn which surrounded the house; and here tents of various sizes and denominations were pitched, in which the wares were to be displayed. We will not pause to describe the various difficulties which took place during the progress of the arrangements, principally produced by the little experience which the givers of the entertainment had acquired in such matters; for they had read of such things in newspapers, but had never seen them practised. Mrs. Woodby had her ideas, Mr. Woodby his, and young ladies theirs. Mrs. Woodby's ideas of "doing the thing handsome" were at variance with those of her daughters, and in some measure with those of her husband, but they all agreed in the one resolution, "that the thing was to be done handsomely." This discordance produced a course of much wrangling and discussion. What the mother deemed sufficiently good, the daughters disapproved; and the mezzo-termine proposed by the father was pronounced vulgar. The young ladies longed for the advice of Lady Thomson, whose word on such occasions was with them law; but the father and mother, who dreaded the expense which she would have authorised, were secretly pleased at her absence.

Anne and Ellen had heard enough upon the subject of giving parties during their attempts at fashionable talk at Brighton, with the Captain Swaggles and Captain Bobadils of their acquaintance, to impress them with the conviction that every sort of costly fare, called luxuries of the season, was as positively necessary to a ball as fiddles. A hot disquisition upon wine, led to a controversy upon ices, which branched out into a debate upon jellies, soups, and French pasties, and continued upon the subjects of decorations and illuminations, until both Mr. and Mrs. Woodby began to groan under the torment which they had inflicted upon themselves, and bemoaned their hard fate that they should ever have been betrayed into committing so great a folly as giving a great ball. But the principal controversy was upon the subject of the invitations. Some opined for one person, others for another; some were to be rejected for one foolish reason, others to be invited for one equally absurd. The Talkingtons of

Chute House were not to be invited, because they had been heard to say that Mr. Woodby's new lodges were like two sentry-boxes;—then the Evelyns of Adamston were to be got at and invited because they were a more ancient family than the Thorofields, as a matter of spite to rivals in riches. The Algoods of Badington were rejected upon their principles, which did not approve of fancy bazars, and charity which did not stand upon some stronger basis than the "light fantastic toe;" whilst the Alcocks of Henbury were asked because the Miss Alcocks could dance the fashionable dances, the objects of the charity were frequently lost sight of in the excitement produced by the ball; whilst the interests of the ball were insidiously advocated as those of the charity. In the mean while, however, the quantity of packages inclosing the fruits of the labour of the charitable neighbourhood was immense. The results of the examination were curious and worthy of historical record, as illustrative of national taste and character in the nineteenth century. The principal articles produced consisted of pin-cushions, pen-wipers, kettle-holders, rugs of various sizes, carpet-shoes, and embroidered bags, all characteristic of neatness and snugness. Then as specimens of vanity were produced embroidery in its various shapes, articles of dress, and fripperies of all sorts. The arts were represented by little abortive drawings in crayons and water-colour, with the exception of Edward Manby's productions.—Half-a-dozen scratches by the talented Miss Jenkins were put down at a great price, because being unintelligible, they were called spirited; and that amiable young man Mr. Simpson had been prevailed upon to bestow some of his inimitable sketches from nature, in one of which a stick resting against a barn-door had been portrayed with wonderful fidelity,—and they were also called drawings of great price. But of all those who had laboured in the cause of charity, the inhabitants of Ivycote shone conspicuous: they had employed themselves in manufacturing things really useful, (Aunt Fanny excepted, who would be genteel) and their donation was a blessing to the poor. Aunt Barbara had taken the flannel department under her peculiar management, whence issued petticoats and waist-coats in abundance; whilst Mary had made caps for the children, and gowns for the old women. To form a catalogue of the various things sent to be disposed of, would require a

larger portion of our paper than we are willing to bestow; therefore we beg the reader to bear in mind that, with some exceptions, if he can think of any one thing more useless and less called for in the common affairs of life than another, he would have been sure to find it there.

A day before the fête took place, we are happy to be able to announce the arrival of Lady Thomson, whose advice upon the general arrangement had been looked upon as indispensable, and who was expected to arrive from Cheltenham with some exquisite specimens of her work. We will suppress all her criticisms, the numerous changes which she insisted upon making, and the tyranny which she exercised in advising Mrs. Woodby to act against her own plans, and proceed at once to the opening of certain baskets in which were contained those exquisite nominal specimens of her own work. She exhibited some very handsome articles of embroidery, which she took care to say were her own, but of which in truth she had merely worked a few stitches; after they had been properly admired, she drew forth a parcel, and prefacing its appearance with a speech from Lord Demone, who professed himself sorry at his inability to attend, she added that he had sent his present to be consecrated to the interests of the charity. Every one was anxious to inspect it; but when it was broken open, mortification was expressed in all sorts of deprecating speeches.

"La!" said Mrs. Woodby; "it is nothing but a set of newspapers!"

"What can he send us the 'Fashionable Advertiser' for?" said Anne.

"It is one of his jokes, I suppose," said Mr. Woodby; "but he is a poor hand at that, after all!"

Lady Thomson reddened with indignation when she heard these words. "I tell you what," she said; "this newspaper, as you call it, will make the fortune of your bazaar. If your bumpkins have no relish for wit, I can't give it to them; but if they have a spark of it, they will be quarrelling to buy these sheets at any price."

"Will they indeed?" said Mrs. Woodby: "do, pray, let us read it."

"Let me tell you," continued Lady Thomson, "that you are not half sufficiently aware of Lord Demone's merits. It's a downright sin not to laugh at every thing he says; and if you have the least pretension to fashion, you ought

to be on the broad grin if you even knew him to be in the county: how much more, then, if he were in the room!"

"Do, pray, let us read," reiterated Mrs. Woodby, seconded by her daughter. Upon which Lady Thomson, assisted by Anne and Ellen, undertook to unfold its contents, and read as follows; whilst Mr. and Mrs. Woodby, in spite of their better inclination, preserved a gravity of aspect which showed how totally the powers of sarcasm were thrown away upon them.

THE FASHIONABLE ADVERTISER OR COURT REPOSITORY.

[No. 1. LONDON, APRIL 1, 1835. *Price 5s.*]

The Opera.—Samuel Shift has the honour to inform the nobility and gentry, and the public at large, that this splendid establishment will open for the ensuing season with an *éclat* unequalled in former years; and that, in addition to the first talent in Europe, he has procured at great expense the first singer from the Court of the Emperor of China, and some of the most powerful bass voices ever heard from Patagonia. He is happy to be able to announce the arrival of the celebrated howling dervishes from Constantinople, who will perform their grand fanatical choruses for the first time in Christendom, and that he has engaged that famous professor of the Turkish drum, *Alladin*, whose solos on that instrument are unrivalled.

He has however determined to devote one night of the week to representations adapted to the tastes of those who resort to the metropolis from the country in order to enjoy the pleasures of the season; and to that effect the Italian artists have kindly undertaken to devote their powers to singing the most popular English songs and ballads, and other portions of our national music; and in the ballet, out of regard to the feelings of the timid and unpractised, the lady performers have been prevailed upon to dance in flannel, and the gentlemen in drab cloth trousers and gaiters.—Particulars at the Office, and of all Booksellers of the United Kingdom.

Wanted, a Footman.—He must be a man of active ha-

bits; for in addition to his usual business he will be required to run about with notes all day and sit up all night, and he must know the Court Guide by heart.—Apply at No. 1, Gower-street.

Wanted, a Pair of Job Horses.—They must be prime Jobs, that know their work well. They are wanted for light work about town, to start after breakfast with a steady, well-regulated family, to go the usual fashionable rounds as practised on coming from the country; that is, to the Exhibition at Somerset-house, the Panorama in Leicester-square, the Tunnel at Rotherhithe, the India Docks, the Diorama in Regent's Park, before luncheon: then to the rehearsal of Ancient Music, and Howell and James's, and all the principal shops before the Park; then the Park till dinner; to be ready and fresh at nine o'clock to go to the Opera, then to three parties at least, and to finish with the usual ball, so as to be back at home by sun-rise. Inquire of A. Z. at Long's.

Found on a Sofa at Almack's.—A Reticule, enclosing a lady's reputation. All the letters and notes have been carefully read and examined, and their contents, containing the most interesting disclosures, will be most conscientiously divulged. Any body sending for the same No. 1, Squib's Alley, letters post paid, with proper testimonials, will be attended to.

Chaperons.—Several old well-seasoned Chaperons on hire. They are warranted to sit all night in one place without stirring—of course a higher rate of pay will be expected for those who can sleep standing. A few extra ones for water-parties may be had, who are not sick in a boat, and who can eat drumsticks.—Apply No. 70, Monmouth-street.

Charades.—The elegant Mrs. X being about to open her house with a course of humorous Charades, a premium is here offered for genuine puns, and for some good words with triplicate meanings. It is requested that those who are invited to this refined amusement will come with a determination to laugh.

Amateur Concert.—Mrs. Crotchet will give her first

Concert to-morrow night. Those who come for talking's sake are requested to wait for the choruses and the crashes; they are particularly desired to respect the solos.

Mr. Jeerall, Professor of Undefined Asseverations, commonly known under the name of White Lies, has the honour to inform the fashionable world, that having made the most profound study of his art, he is enabled successfully to adapt it to all the various purposes of life. Truth, philosophically speaking, being but a series of relative assertions, he can adapt his mode of treating it to the most tender consciences, so as to enable its owners to pass through the world with comfort to themselves, acquiring the respect and esteem of others. He has exalted the art of writing notes, from the simplest to the most abstruse subjects to the rank of a science. He will write a note of invitation with so much skill, that whether it be intended to prevent acceptance, or the contrary, he secures a certain result. He furnishes unexceptionable excuses for all the various occasions and difficulties incident to fashionable life, particularly when some pleasure greater than one accepted has happened to supervene.

He keeps a morning academy for footmen and porters, teaching them all the most approved methods of denying their masters and mistresses, giving them tact in distinguishing persons—the bore from the agreeable man, the dun from the rich uncle, and the country cousin from the park beau. In short, he requests only to be tried, and he will warrant himself as being the most useful of professors, teaching the most useful of arts, and superior to all others for advancement in the world. Direct Flam-street, opposite the Lying-in-Hospital.

Provident Love Insurance Office.

The object of this Society being new, we are sure it will powerfully attract the attention of the thinking public. It insures against Love, and its ill effects upon the human frame.

Premiums will depend upon the constitution, character, and age of the person insuring.

To those who bring certificates of ill-temper, a great abatement of premium is made. The ugly and old may insure literally for nothing.

Directors:

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WANT PLACES.

As companion to a Lady.—A lady of undoubted capabilities for swallowing. Warranted to have the largest gullet in England. Never contradicts.—Is fond of salt soup.

As Coachman.—A gentleman, educated at college. Can have undeniable recommendations from his last place. Would prefer driving a Brighton coach. Pays for all fractures of limbs,—has never upset more than two coaches in his life. Inquire at Whippy the Saddler's.

As Treasurer.—A gentleman, who has run through two fortunes, would wish to become treasurer to some charity, feeling himself now to understand the value of money.

As Tutor.—A gentleman, brought up at a public school, and a graduate at one of the Universities, wishes to undertake the charge of one or two, or more pupils. Is a thorough professor of slang in all its branches; teaches the art of betting, with an entire knowledge of calculating the odds; is well versed in horse-flesh; and being a professed sportsman, is admirably calculated 'to teach the young idea how to shoot.' Smokes, and is safe at the gambling-table.

Wanted a Prime Bore.—The advertiser being afflicted with insomnolency, having in vain tried hop-pillows, essence of salad, laudanum, and crude opium, is anxious to try the effects of a bore. He must be a thorough bore; relating stories which never end, with all the proper digressions, repetitions, and want of point, with due monotony of voice and unchangeableness of aspect. He must

be thorough master of the histories of elections, parish meetings, vestry and grand jury meetings; able to discuss the poor-law question, and not unskilled in detailing all the vicissitudes of a fox-hunt. Apply to X. Y., next door to the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly.

NEW WORKS JUST READY.

The Art of Dancing without an Ear. Cuts.

Specimens of Table Talk, or How to be Witty without Wit. By Bell Clapper, Esq.

"Full of novel ideas."—*Tatler.*

Travels in the Back Settlements of London; with a topographical account of Tavistock and Torrington Squares. By E. Boyle, Esq., E.C.G Author of Court Guide, &c.

"Great research—uncommon enterprise."—*Examiner.*

Tales of a Cut-throat, 3 vols. By the Author of Kill Him and Eat Him.

"Great feeling and pathos."—*Spectator.*

My neighbour's Wife; a Novel. 3 vols. By the Author of Paul Pry.

"A striking story—full of curious incidents—deep passion—some capital hints."—*Domestic Review.*

To Novel Writers.—For sale, a large assortment of Skeleton Novels, upon all subjects, from the gossipy fashionable to the coarsely vulgar. Also several very interesting Plots to be disposed of, warranted possible; one, which may be had at an extra price, warranted probable. Inquire at the Manufactory, New Road.

"Well, I declare!" said Mrs. Woodby, after it had been read, having unsuccessfully tried to laugh during the operation; "I dare say it is very clever, but it is only a newspaper after all—it is just what one reads every day in the advertisements, and I think that Mr. Jeerall must be a very useful man—I should like to get some lessons myself about writing notes."

"I dare say papa could afford us a box at the Opera," said Anne, "and I dare say Lord Demone could say a word for us to Mr. Shift,—now wouldn't he, Lady Thomson?"

"I wish," thought Ellen, "that I could get one of those plots for a novel: its only that which I want to enable me to write one."

"That Love Insurance Office," exclaimed Mr. Woodby, "appears but a poor concern—that sort of thing will never

do. I dare say it is only a hoax—I never heard of one of the directors' names before."

"What a pack of fools!" sighed out Lady Thomson in an under breath.

CHAPTER XVI.

Showing how a thing good in itself may be rendered utterly ridiculous.

At length the day came, and the morning dawned with great beauty at Belvedere Hall. The bells of the village church rang a merry peal; all the villagers were dressed in their best clothes; and almost before the sun had risen, the children of the charity school were arrayed in their fancy costume preparatory to being exhibited. Every thing had been arranged for the sale on the day before, and at noon the iron gates which connected Mr. Woodby's lodges were thrown open to receive the visitors. About that time equipages of all denominations began to drop in; and before two o'clock had struck, the lawn was thronged by a very considerable number of people. The great and the wealthy came in state—all made the best display which their means could afford; and we need not add, that on such an occasion as this, the gold-laced hat and button-holes had not been forgotten, when honest Brown appeared driving the pony-chaise in which the good family from Ivycote made its appearance.

Although the lawn which surrounded the house was flat, and although the grounds presented but little picturesque beauty, yet still, wherever there is sunshine and verdure, and trees, and an assemblage dressed in brilliant colours, more is not wanting to produce a pleasing and cheerful picture. The white tents pitched under the trees contrasting with the various tints of green, and with the beds of flowers, which no cockneyism could rob of their rich and gorgeous colouring, added greatly to the general effect. The numbers of people constantly flocking around the stalls gave the whole scene a character of animation without which no fête can succeed; and when Mrs. Goold Woodby was con-

gratulated upon the beauty of the weather, which she took as a personal compliment, and the excellent management displayed in her arrangements, her head was so turned with delight, that she became almost independent of the question which she had so long allowed to tyrannise over her, namely, "What will Lady Thomson think?"

Lady Thomson, with protection in her looks and with satin over her substantial person, was one of the most conspicuous among the company, and took upon herself to do the honours, seeing that the whole thing wore every appearance of being successful. Aunt Barbara's new gray gown and Fanny's cherry colour again did good service, and Mary's beauty was the theme of every tongue. The Miss Woodbys looked divine in dresses exactly similar; whilst the Miss Popkins did credit by their rich attire to the wealth of which they were the heiresses. The Thorofields, the Evelyns, the Algoods, the Alcocks, and a hundred others too numerous to mention, all were there, and all beaming with the best intentions to be gay and charitable.

Mrs. Woodby was waiting with anxious expectation for the moment when her first theatrical flourish should be displayed by the appearance of the charity children, and had deferred the striking up of a certain band of music collected on the occasion until that event should occur. It appears, however, that some demur had taken place among the soberer part of the parish upon the characters allotted to the children, and to their leaders, the schoolmaster and mistress, and which indeed had been disseminated by those two personages themselves. It was said to be objectionable that they should personify Heathens, when the object of their appearance was to promote a deed of Christian charity. Therefore, instead of Cupids and Psyches, the children were turned into fairies; whilst Mrs. Humphries, who was well read in history, chose to appear as Queen Elizabeth; and Merriday, who passed for a theologian, determined to call himself Solomon. This matter being settled to their hearts' content, the procession set off from the village school amid the shouts and huzzas of the joyous boys and girls; and just as Mrs. Woodby began to despair of their appearing at all, they made their entrance on the lawn, when the music struck up and every one was gathered together to witness the scene.

This part of the entertainment had been intended by way of a surprise by Mrs. Woodby and her daughters;

and as her husband had not been made a party to it, he stood by with inquiring looks, eager to receive an explanation for this unlooked-for display. She winked and shook her head, and appeared vastly pleased with her own ingenuity; when she, in her turn, was surprised upon perceiving Merriday step forward with the greatest gravity in front of the procession, and taking from his pocket a sheet of paper, he deliberately unfolded it, and then, with a loud sing-song voice, read as follows:—

THE SCHOOLMASTER'S SONG.

Ye gentlemen and ladies all,
For such indeed you are,
Come listen to my humble call
And flock to our bazaar.

I sing of him who is a man,
And Woodby is the name;
A better show me if you can,
Or one of brighter fame.

And Mrs. Woodby, too, for she
Is such another woman;
She is the wedded wife of he,
And some thing more than human.

For Mr. Woodby he thinks right
When others they think wrong;
To build a lodge is his delight,
And make it extra strong.

Then Mrs. Woodby tends a farm
Where poultry lay their eggs;
She keeps the cow-boys nice and warm,—
They hang their hats on pegs.

More wealth he has than all the East;
He knows what makes a groat—
That two and two make four at least,
And nought from nought is nought.

Then Mrs. Woodby she is Goold,
If ever gold there be;
King Charles it was, so we are told,
Gave out her pedigree.

And since they are so conjugal,
We will them conjugate,
And teach the odds 'twixt will and shall,
Then leave them to their fate.

He's would be, could be, should be, he;
For what more can I say?
She' better than she should be, she;
So now huzza! huzza! huzza!

The last line was repeated over and over again by the children in loud plaudits, having been so tutored by their master, until the air rang with their cries; and the song was professed to be so much admired by the company, who were happy to pay a compliment to the host and hostess, that it was encored with universal applause. Mr. Woodby took the compliment paid to him and his wife with becoming modesty, his joy at thus being an object of general interest peeping out through the medium of certain struts, complacent looks over his person, and little exulting ejaculations which he could not restrain. As for Mrs. Woodby, she was mad with delight, and went bustling about seeking for compliments, seeing how well her scheme had taken: but at length meeting Lady Thomson, from whom she expected a burst of approbation, what was her dismay when she heard her exclaim, "Are ye all turned mad? —what could possess you to get up this trumpery? Why, you'll make yourselves the laughing-stock of half the kingdom!"

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Woodby, the flush of angry mortification rising into her face and making her look any thing but an angel of meekness. "Why, the Dodds of Dandelion did it—so Mrs. Dodd told me at Brighton, and it answered very well, and I am sure ours has answered very well too."

"Who are the Dodds of Dandelion, I should like to know?" said Lady Thomson with contempt in her accent. "It might do very well for such low persons as they are, no doubt; but really, if you have pretensions to life, you ought to know how to live."

"Know how to live!" said Mrs. Woodby, taking up her words in anger. "If the Dodds don't know how to live, you'll allow at least that Mr. Simpleton Sharp knows how to live; and he it was who put me up to having Roman gods and goddesses, with Jupiter and Juno, and so on; although they forgot the best of it, which was the peacock and the turkey-cock."

"Forgot what?" said Lady Thompson.

"Here, come here," cried out Mrs. Woodby to Merriday, who stood at some distance full of smiles and self-satisfaction at the success which had accompanied his effusion,—

"here explain to Lady Thomson all about it, and tell me where you got that song, for I never heard a word upon the subject."

"Why, you see, your ladyship," said Merriday, "I came out as Solomon; and Mrs. Humphries, she was the immortal Queen Bess."

"How?" said Mrs. Woodby in utter surprise: "Solomon! did not I send my orders that you was to be Jupiter, and she Juno?"

"Yes, ma'am, so we was at first; but so please you, when we were sitting out this morning, Mr. Simkins the clerk, and Mr. Cruikshank too, they said it warn't right in us to be Heathens, when all was doing for Christian charity's sake; so, you see, we changed: the children all became fairies; and Mrs. Humphries, she chose Queen Bess; and I, (for I admire the character,) I was Solomon."

"My goodness me!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodby: "well, I'm not surprised at your thinking it vulgar now," turning to Lady Thomson. "Only conceive that they should have dared to change, all on account of Simkins' objection! I'll give it to Simkins for this! Mr. Simpleton Sharp, I, and the girls, made it out so clever, that nothing could be better than the manner in which we settled it: but really to get Solomon and Queen Bess for Jupiter and Juno, it is too bad! besides having neither Cupids nor *Fiskies*, (for so she pronounced Psyches,) which even you will allow to be genteel."

"I disapprove of the whole thing," said Lady Thomson; "it will cast a ridicule upon what would otherwise have been very good and well managed. And then that foolish song!—what could possess him to write that song?"

"Please your ladyship," said Merriday, "it is all my own composing; and I thought, as Solomon did sing a song, I might as well sing this, and then it would be all in character: and so I hope no offence—for we expected it would be a surprise."

"A surprise it was with a vengeance!" said Lady Thomson, turning on her heel with a look of pity, shrugging up her shoulders at the same time; whilst her friend, glad to have found an excuse for any blame that might accrue to her, resumed her active duties, and busied herself in furthering the objects of the day's meeting.

In the mean while, the bazaar was prospering with all the zeal and liberality usually displayed on such occasions. The "Beauty Stall," so called, was established in the most

conspicuous tent, ornamented by pink draperies, and spread over with long tables or counters on which were displayed the numerous and heterogeneous wares already alluded to. Here presided the two Miss Woodbys, the youngest Miss Popkin, and Mary Allnutt. Next to it was situated, that over which the elder Popkins and Aunt Fanny presided; and a third was superintended by some other ladies whose names it would be superfluous to mention.

The despotism exercised by the venders over their customers in demanding the most exhorbitant prices, particularly by those privileged tyrants in the Beauty Stall, was only to be equalled by the submission with which that despotism was admitted: pincushions sold for prices greater than they might have fetched at the first invention of pins; a pair of scissors were prized as much as they would be in the most distant parts of the New World; and one of Edward Manby's drawings was paid for at the price of a sketch of Michael Angelo's. The lovely Mary got so animated in the excess of her zeal, and her beauty was so much heightened by the little arts which she put forth to entice the gold from the purses of her customers, that her winnings alone, it was said, were sufficient to raise the front of the future school-house. Those who only came to gaze at her beauty remained to buy her wares; and whilst they delivered their money, gave up their hearts also. She was utterly unconscious of being the cause of more attraction than her associates: her total want of vanity, her simplicity of manner, and her excited eagerness, were more interesting than even her extraordinary beauty. But the others exhibited a different conduct: they looked upon the present opportunity as one eminently adapted to show off their charms, and they did not lose it. Miss Woodby and Miss Popkin engaged in deep flirtations with every young gentleman who approached their market, and threw as many airs and graces into their speech, looks and attitudes as would have done credit to the most finished practitioners behind a real counter.

Ellen—the sentimental Ellen, alone appeared abstracted and pre-occupied. She was not heartily engaged in her work; but her eyes were ever and anon turned towards the avenues leading from the entrance of the grounds, as if she expected some one to arrive. When she was asked the price of an article, she could scarcely give an answer: her mind seemed far removed from such objects—a demand for Edward Manby's sketches alone brought her mind back

to her business, and then she asked prices so exorbitant, that could any one have dived into her thoughts, he would have discovered that the value which she placed upon the sketches was only a token of the love she felt for the artist. At length, of a sudden, her pale face reddening to the very roots of her hair, as if she had seen an apparition, she exclaimed to her sister, "Goodness, Anne! there he is!—don't you see him?"

"Whom do you mean?" said Anne, not in the least disturbed, and continuing to tumble over pin-cushions, pen-wipers, and housewifes in search of a comb that had fallen from her thickly-complicated tresses.

"Why, Tom, to be sure," said Ellen.

"So he is!" exclaimed Anne; "and Edward Manby with him. Better late than never! They are so monstrous proud, those Cantabs, that they think to do us a great honour in coming thus far to see us."

Upon hearing this, both Charlotte Popkin and Mary looked up; whilst Ellen, feigning a natural surprise, exclaimed, "Oh yes, it is Edward: I thought they never would come!"

The young gentlemen in question, who were then gradually making their approach, were as dissimilar in person, character, and pursuits, as two individuals composed of flesh and blood could well be. Tom Woodby was a short, coarse, insignificant looking young man, who was always endeavouring to inflate himself into consequence, looking up with fierceness into the faces of tall men as if he would say, "I am as good as you!" and eyeing little men with a downward aspect, implying "I am taller than you!" He was full of conceit, vulgar-minded and headstrong. His future good prospects were ever before his eyes, and this conviction gave him a consequential air which he accompanied with certain gestures of pretension agreeing ill with his looks.—Edward Manby, on the contrary, was a youth of peculiarly prepossessing appearance, enlivened by great sprightliness. There was a soft, placid, and benevolent expression in his face which made it an agreeable object to look at: he was frank without being forward, humble without servility, and full of natural grace without the least affectation. The habitual cast of his features was contemplative and grave; and as he was rather more taciturn than loquacious, upon first acquaintance he wore an appearance of reserve, which, however, entirely vanished when he began to talk. Every one who knew him liked him: owing to an habitual deference of manner he

was peculiarly apt to captivate the confidence of women, because he thus raised them in their own estimation.

Having reached the front of the tent from whence they had at first been perceived, and having made all the proper speeches of recognition, accompanied by the usual demonstrations of satisfaction, we must defer to our next chapter the description of a few of the effects which their arrival produced.

CHAPTER XVII.

The country ball. First symptoms of the tender passion.

We believe that the coincidence of the affections called "love at first sight" is almost unknown in England at the present day—at least among the upper ranks of society. It may perhaps occasionally be found to take place where handsome youths rarely meet comely maidens, and, with hearts mature for the intrusion of the tender passion, suddenly encounter other hearts all prepared to receive the soft impression, and thus love and pine, and become disordered at the recollection of what has appeared to them the most divine and bewitching of beings. But as society is now constituted, where beautiful faces and engaging persons are so common that it is almost a distinction to be ugly,—where the tender-hearted Corydon meets the lovely Phyllis—not in the sequestered vale, by the borders of a murmuring brook, nor under the umbrageous wood; but in the crowded assembly, in the swarming public walk, where he meets her rivalled and surpassed in beauty and in charms by a hundred other Phillises; under such circumstances it is almost impossible that so quick an exchange can take place as to establish a passion after a few preliminary glances.

The two young men were both at the same moment struck with the extraordinary beauty and grace of Mary. The presumptuous Tom, who looked upon every thing in his father's house as exclusively his own, unobservant of Charlotte Popkin, who, he knew, had been brought there purposely for the promotion of a family scheme, at once addressed himself to the retiring Mary, as if he were secure of achieving a conquest upon his first address. He approached her in a sort of easy picktooth manner, looked at her with effrontery, spoke to her in a tone of familiar acquaintance, and then, by way of exhibiting his importance,

requested Manby to go and seek out his father and mother in order to inform them of his arrival. Mary, with that quickness of perception which characterises woman, had at one glance recognised in Tom's companion him whom she had heard so constantly eulogised and admired, and an involuntary suffusion had overspread her face, for which she could give to herself no good reason: but when she heard young Woodby's speech and observed his arrogant manner, she was at once restored to her composure, and asserted a dignity which to that moment she was ignorant of being inherent in her nature.

Manby, in the mean while, had stood aloof, scarcely heeding the more than cordial welcome with which he was received by the Miss Woodbys in the absorbing interest which Mary's beauty and appearance had already produced upon him. Nothing that he ever read in poetry, no image that had ever offered itself to his imagination, had ever come up to what he now saw before him. He gazed in silence upon that downcast look of modesty—that bloom and freshness of complexion—that symmetry of form, and was filled with that enchantment which seemed spread over every thing that surrounded her, until he was ashamed of his astonishment and embarrassed at his own awkwardness. Young Woodby's words broke the spell by which he was bound; and totally heedless of the offensive manner in which those words were expressed, he hastened to perform his errand.

"How can you treat Edward in that manner?" said Ellen to her brother, with anger in her look: "he is not your servant."

"Why, what's the matter now?" said Tom, apparently nettled. "Ned is a good sort of fellow, and would go to the d—l to please me. My servant indeed!—who said he was?"

These words were scarcely uttered, before Mrs. Woodby, escorted by her husband and followed by Manby, appeared in search of her son, whom she greeted with reproaches for having arrived so late, and immediately dragged him away to present him to their several friends. Her form of introduction to her intimates was generally after this wise: "My son Tom, 'please." To those who were entitled to more consideration, she made use of a little more involution: "allow me to 'troduce our eldest." Upon every one of which occasions, the youth made certain contortions commonly called bows, and paraded his insignificant person, apparently proud of the gifts which Nature had bestowed upon him.

Manby, in the mean while, was passed over totally unheeded: there were no introductions for him. Mr. Woodby alone said, "Ah, Ned, how are you?" whilst his wife, full of fears lest he should be too much beloved by her daughters, and filled with a secret conviction of his superiority over her son, lost no opportunity of slighting him. Lady Thomson, who really admired, and who would have found pleasure in protecting him, had she esteemed him to be the 'genteel thing,' thought him too dangerous a person to turn loose among young ladies who were too romantic to calculate consequences, and therefore seldom bestowed upon him the light of her countenance. Abel Allnutt alone, who remarked how much he was neglected, and who was forcibly drawn towards him by the prepossessing beauty of his countenance and the modest manliness of his demeanour, went up to Mr. Woodby and asked that he might make his acquaintance. "You'll find Ned a clever fellow," said Woodby; "but he is too poor and too proud to make his way in the world." Upon which the introduction was made: and perhaps no intimacy was ever so soon formed as that which took place between these two men; for there is a freemasonry among good and generous natures which acts, perhaps, with greater force than with sympathies of any other description. Although incased in an humble and unpromising exterior, Manby soon discovered the excellence of Abel's mind: whilst Abel, accustomed to meet with little other than vulgar and worldly people in the confined circle in which he moved, was delighted to find in Manby sentiments so congenial to his own. Perhaps, on the part of Manby, the desire of becoming acquainted with Abel was more interested than contrariwise; because, although we do not pretend to assert that this was a case of love at first sight, yet true it is that Manby had been so much struck by Mary's beauty and appearance, that the circumstance, which he soon discovered, of Abel being Mary's uncle, very materially enhanced his desire of making himself agreeable to him.

Once having become acquainted with Abel, he very soon after was made known to the other members of his family. Aunt Barbara, without taking into consideration what might be his fortune, connexions, or future prospects, or in the least reverting to that chain of consequences which, like deductions in mathematics, are so sure to run through the minds of mothers and aunts, when

young men are introduced to their daughters or nieces, received him with cordiality, and soon asked him to visit them at Ivycote. Aunt Fanny sighed for those pastimes when with a look she would have ensured a conquest over so handsome a youth, and still hoped that even on that very night she might secure him for a partner in the dance (for she danced still,) and therefore her reception of him was more than flattering. As for Mary, we have already described the effect which his first appearance had made upon her. We do not pretend to say, that, in this instance too, love at first sight was exemplified; but in truth it is in vain to deny that the foundation of the tender passion had long lain in her breast, although there existed in her mind several counteracting influences to prevent the rapid growth of the feeling. Ellen was standing near her when Manby was presented to Mary; she watched Manby's looks and actions with the eye of a lynx, and the apprehension that she had always laboured under, (like the forewarning which so frequently precedes a disaster,) that Mary would be her rival, made her alive to the smallest interchange of words or looks that took place between them. What occurred on this occasion passed off like most introductions made between taciturn young men to shy young women: the young man stammered out a few incoherent monosyllables, and the young lady said nothing.

We come now to the moment when the ball was about to take the place of the morning's amusement. The produce of the sales had realized the utmost expectations of the promoters of the charity, and every thing seemed propitious to the intended result, that Mr. and Mrs. Goold Woodby's name should go down to posterity on the tabular front of a new school-house. Between the termination of the bazaar and the beginning of the ball, the principal talk was of the comparative earnings of the different stalls: the Beauties had made so much havoc in the purses as well as in the hearts of the company, that their receipts had been out and out the most considerable. Lady Thomson had so ingeniously contrived to make every one believe that they were not only the promoters of wit, but wits themselves, that she sold all the 'Fashionable Advertisers' at unheard-of prices. Every body likes to be in the fashion and therefore every body bought a copy: but it was amusing to observe how few discovered where the point of the humour lay, and how many went about

exclaiming, "How good! what excellent fun!" who were only sufficiently sentient to catch the sympathy of a horse-laugh without having discovered how that convulsion had been produced.

It will be easily conceded that wherever the mind is not interested, every amusement must end by becoming vapid and fatiguing. The success of a masquerade depends upon the wit and ingenuity of those who support the characters they have adopted; but what possible amusement can emanate, after the eye has once been sated, from a collection of fine dresses? On the occasion before us, whatever gaiety might have been forthcoming, such as is usual when the body is left to its own natural impulse in dance and mirth, here became constrained by the ponderous effect of fine dresses. Mrs. Woodby appeared in crimson velvet as Mary Queen of Scots, with a close cap of the same material, which fitting tight to her head, threw out the broad orb of her face into prominent relief, whilst the border of pearls with which it was encircled, sweeping in an easy curve on her forehead, was terminated in the middle by a large oval-like pearl, which acted throughout the evening as a pendulum over her nose. Her daughters came forward with the pretensions of vestal virgins, wearing long floating draperies of the lightest muslin pendent from the back of their heads; but, unsatisfied with the simplicity of plain white, they chose to adorn their persons with the gorgeous colourings of sultanas: thus were neither simple nor magnificent. Mr. Woodby personified the Great Mogul in a turban and feather; but he was very much put out throughout the entertainment because some one asked him with great *naïveté*, whether he had not dressed after the figure-head of the East India Company's ship the Akbar. His son enacted Sir Charles Grandison. Lady Thomson sparkled in a tiara of gold and amethysts, intending to look like Pasta, but calling herself Cleopatra, with a train of white satin, and round-toed sandals of the same, whilst a long viper-like bracelet wound up her plump arm.—As for the Allnutts, their dresses were quite in keeping with their character. Aunt Bab, by way of fancy, tied the ribands of her cap behind instead of before. Fanny ingeniously had contrived a dress of many colours from the stores of her wardrobe, and thus at a small expense was fine and flaunting; whilst Mary, with the addition of a few flowers and a few extra ribands, composed a cos-

tume which, by its bewitching simplicity, was more attractive than those of the most gorgeous, amongst whom the rich Miss Popkins shone conspicuous.

We will not tire our readers with all the vapid circumstances of a ball—of a country ball too, in which there are usually but few occurrences worthy of record. The prominent circumstances of the evening which, as far as the interest of our tale is concerned, it is our duty to point out, was the rapid progress which took place in the acquaintance so recently formed between Edward Manby and Mary. In vain Ellen kept hovering about him, endeavouring all in her power to make herself the object of his attentions; he heeded her not, but, like a moth attracted by light, he could not drag himself from the invincible attractions of Mary's beauty. He first talked to her upon all those common-place subjects which are usually discussed between young gentlemen and ladies in a ball-room; but, instead of finding one well versed in the technicalities of dissipation, what was his delight to discover that she had never before been in public, and that the pomp and circumstance of the exhibition which surrounded them, were almost as new to her as the dancing of men with tight clothes and of women with uncovered faces might be to a Mahometan! The good sense, the ingenuousness, and the good feeling of her observations, raised her in his estimation; the softness of her manner and the sweet tones of her voice charmed him, and the surpassing beauty of her smile and countenance kept his eye in a fixed gaze, which indeed amounted almost to rudeness.

She, in the mean while, was overtaken by sensations which she had never before felt. Charm of manner and general agreeableness of person are not to be defined: they are one of the greatest gifts which Nature in her bounty to man can bestow; they put him well with his fellow-creatures—they ensure him a good reception go where he will, and gather that brilliant attraction around him, which sunshine throws over every object upon which it alights. Edward Manby was abundantly gifted by these qualities; and not being conscious of their existence, they acted with greatly increased power upon those by whom they were discovered. Mary was charmed, she knew not why:—she had never before seen one so total a stranger who had in the least attracted her notice; his conversation pleased her—his attentions flattered her, and

she felt an irresistible propensity to treat him as a friend, for confidence soon becomes sympathetic between pure minds. But while she willingly gave way to the pleasure of his conversation, her satisfaction was checked by observing the sad and mortified appearance of Ellen's countenance, who sat by eyeing her with jealousy and asperity of looks. The conversation which she had had with her on a former occasion upon the subject of Edward immediately flashed upon her recollection; and the consciousness that she was the cause of giving her pain acted like a cloud passing over a smiling landscape, and a chill accompanied by constraint on a sudden came across her manner towards the enraptured youth. A middle course often engenders a false position; and thus between the fear of offending Ellen, and the desire of making herself agreeable to Edward, the inoffensive maiden only succeeded in alarming and irritating the one, whilst she mortified the other. Her last resource in this dilemma was abruptly to rise, which she did in the hope that her absence might bring on that consummation which Ellen so devoutly wished—a conversation with Edward. But she was mistaken—Edward had never loved Ellen, and still less was he in a humour now to bestow any attentions upon her: therefore, like a stricken deer which had received the shaft in its body, not knowing how to disengage itself from the smart,—so he mechanically followed Mary, pursuing her with the eyes, and longing to renew the intercourse which had been established between them. But the ball as well as the day had by this time drawn to a close, and strong symptoms of general departure became manifest.

The gay scene during its various changes and fluctuations might be compared to an exhibition on a theatre; but as it gradually glided from the drawing-room to the entrance-hall, what with huddling on of cloaks, tying up of throats, wrapping up heads, and precautionary ejaculations against cold and rheumatism, it soon partook in appearance more of the approaches to an hospital. Every one thought it right to pay a compliment to the master and mistress of the house upon the success of their day's entertainment, and they took it with the same satisfaction that successful ministers receive the praises of the public after a fortunate measure. The arrogant Tom attributed much of the glory of the fête to himself, and in consequence thought that he conferred a distinguished honour

on Mary by helping her to ascend the family vehicle—a privilege which Edward had ceded to him, satisfied with the permission he had received of visiting Ivycote the next day. The lamps and candles had scarcely begun to be extinguished ere Lady Thomson and Anne Woodby commenced the usual gossip upon the events of the day; whilst the disconsolate Ellen, who had been unhappy throughout the evening, began to regain her spirits, when she thought that Mary being gone she would now have Edward all to herself. Little did she know that the affections she wished to secure were not to be won by importunity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A few consequences of dissipation described: the wisest may become foolish.

How various are the feelings apt to arise in every breast, male and female, after a series of dissipation! Hopes raised and depressed; anticipations not realised, pride mortified and elevated; the beginning of a new passion, the extinguishing of an old one; cold calculation and sanguine scheming; the excitement of little spites, the progress of substantial hatreds; false delight and real enjoyment, hollow professions and sincere congratulations;—in short, every smaller passion of the mind and springing of the heart are sure to be exercised during the exhibition of what is often called this rational amusement and innocent enjoyment, and are left to fructify in their consequences by reminiscence. In the case of Edward Manby, our subsequent narrative will show how much the formation of his character and the actions and fortunes of his future life were biassed by the events which we have recorded in the foregoing chapter, which, acting upon a noble and generous nature, were productive of much good.

His companion, Tom, may also be cited as another instance of the power of circumstances to bias the character, although his case was differently constituted. From what has already been said concerning him, the reader may conclude that he was one of those low-minded beings who, when brought into competition with others of a su-

perior cast at school or college, was constantly subject to contumely and mortification. Now, however, he suddenly found himself elevated into a personage of consequence: he was proclaimed and soon felt himself to be the heir of a wealthy house; his mean nature could not withstand the adulation which directly and indirectly he received, and thus he was confirmed in arrogance and in all the attributes of a coxcomb. We might continue to select cases from among the different personages who were acted upon on this occasion, particularly noticing Mr. and Mrs. Woodby's pride of success, their daughters' exacerbation of vanity amidst other passions, the first dawn of ambition in the ladies Allnutt to give a fête, and the confirmation in the mind of Abel of his distaste for worldly doings; but it would take us too far out of the path of our narrative, and we will proceed to the time when, on the following morning, Edward found himself, almost by stealth, laying his plans for a visit to Ivycote.

The discussions at breakfast upon the events of the preceding evening were carried on with great animation. Lady Thomson had been exercising her powers of criticism upon the whole fête, and particularly upon the ball, in terms which showed how much she felt hurt that sufficient attention had not been given to her injunctions. Mrs. Woodby, to ward off this attack, vented her observations upon Lady Thorofield's fancy dress, which she asserted was mean and shabby, considering that she was the wife of a lord; her daughters laughed at Fanny Allnutt, and turned up their noses at Mary's cheap muslin; whilst Mr. Woodby calculated what might be the cost of the whole affair, and expressed indignation at the drunkenness of one of the fiddlers, who, not satisfied with beer, had insisted upon wine.

Availing himself of the little heed taken of him, Edward quietly left the room, but in so doing was not unobserved by Tom Woodby; for, proceeding with a quick step towards Ivycote, he was mortified to hear himself called by name, and obliged in courtesy to await the presence of Tom, who, having made a guess at his intentions, had followed him with the determination of accompanying him to the habitation of her who engrossed both their thoughts. The intimacy—for it could not be called friendship—between these young men had been fostered, assuredly not by any similarity of tastes or dispositions,

but, by various circumstances scarcely necessary here to enumerate, Tom had found in Edward's easy disposition more compliance with his domineering temper than with others of his fellow-collegians; and Edward's position in life naturally threw him into the society of those who were acquainted with his relations, and who lived in some degree in their neighbourhood. However forbearing Edward might be in matters of no importance, he was otherwise firm and uncompromising, and so he proved to be on the occasion now before us, for proceeding towards Ivycote, Tom undertook to rally Edward with coarse and unseasonable merriment at his attempt to steal a march upon him in visiting the Allnutts, and continued in the same strain to make remarks upon Mary—remarks so full of licentiousness, that Edward was obliged to rebuke him in a manner to which he had seldom been accustomed. Tom taunting, Edward resenting—the one giving himself airs of libertine superiority, the other allowing no quarter to the coarseness of mind which was exhibited—produced an angry tone of conversation which was at its height when they reached Ivycote, and they were introduced into that peaceful abode hot with contention.

The family at Ivycote had equally been taken up during the morning's meal with discussions upon the events of the preceding evening, and they were scarcely ended ere Tom Woodby and Edward Manby were announced. Charmed and delighted at all they had witnessed, Aunt Bab asserted that it stood to reason, and that she was sure she was right when she said that the parish would be all the better for such doings, and that although there might be some doubt about the propriety of exhibiting charity children in the way they had been, (nor did she much like the school-master's song,) still they would be all the better by a good school-house. Aunt Fanny was so charmed, that she did not see why they too should not give something of the same kind, now that through John's ingenuity they had grown so rich. Mary clapped her hands at the thought; whilst uncle Abel looked thoughtful and shook his head.

When Tom and Edward entered, they were received with open arms, and the whole scene was again discussed; whilst Mr. and Mrs. Woodby were lauded up to the skies for their public spirit. Tom endeavoured to appropriate as much of the honour and glory as he could to himself—and always glancing at Mary, strove to impress the com-

pany present with his own importance. Edward, mean while, as he usually did, allowed himself to remain in the back-ground, quite satisfied with the hearty welcome by which he had been greeted, and with the smile of recognition which he received from Mary: but his companion, not satisfied with vapouring, must needs endeavour to establish his superiority in matters foreign to the present occasion, with a view, as he hoped, to attract Mary and to confound Edward.

Abel having doubted whether the pains which were taken now-a-days to educate the poor would fulfil the general expectations, seeing that, owing to the corruption of the human heart, man was prone to turn benefits into channels of evil, Tom, perking up his little person into the most erect perpendicular, exclaimed, "Egad! sir, I am all for the people: I don't see why a poor man may not read as well as a rich one—one man is as good as another, any day of the week."

"We are all equal, 'tis true, in the sight of God," said Abel, "inasmuch as every one of us will be tried by one and the same law; but if we were all to start fair, as in a race—all with the same advantages of education, still in a very little while some would get ahead of others by mere superiority of intellect, and then their equality would cease."

"Ah! I see," said Tom, "you are one of those who would truckle to a king, and his vile and corrupt ministers."

"As for truckling to a king," said Abel, "I feel it my duty to love, honour, and obey the king; and if that is truckling, I do truckle. As for his ministers, if they are vile and corrupt, they will get their deserts in due time, either from an earthly or a heavenly tribunal; but as long as they are in authority I obey them."

"You are a regular king and constitution boy, I see," said Tom, starting from his seat, as if pleased with his exclamation. "I dare say, now, you hate change and correction of abuses."

"With respect to that," said Abel, "I do not require changes for change's sake; but I am all in favour of them if they be necessary. I hold it for certain, that every country gradually, and according to circumstances, adapts its laws and institutions to its own peculiar wants, modes, and manners of life. A theory may be very good, but it is only made perfect by practice. So, a

shoemaker may make an excellent pair of shoes upon the measure he takes of the foot to be fitted; but he never can prevent their being a little uneasy at first, and they only become agreeable to the wearer after the leather and the foot have adapted themselves one to the other: and so it is with constitutions."

"I see," said Tom, again chuckling, "you are a regular king and constitution man. I hate constitutions as much as I do kings! Sir, give me liberty and equality—it is our right, and we will have it."

"Never mind him," said Edward, who now saw that Abel was becoming vexed; "he does not mean what he says. Ask him whether he would consent to see us walk into Belvedere Hall and help ourselves to what we liked by way of liberty, and whether he is willing to share his fortune with us in equal parts by way of equality. I think I know what his answer would be."

"It stands to reason that he would not," said Aunt Bab; "and I am sure that I would not like to give up our small house to any one who chose to come in, however I might wish to make every body comfortable, no more than the peasant would be pleased to see me settle myself in his cottage, however glad he might be to see me. I am quite sure I 'm right to say, that God has assigned to every one his lot and portion in this world, and with that let him be content."

Mary, in the mean while, far from having been smitten with Mr. Thomas Goold Woodby, junior, upon a nearer acquaintance, shrunk from his advances in the same proportion that she showed herself happy in conversing with Edward Manby, whose eyes seemed to be so much fascinated by her beauty, that his tongue almost forgot its articulation whenever she happened to address him. She inquired of him whether he had lately heard from Liverpool—a place upon which the whole of her thoughts were fixed, because it was from thence she was anxiously expecting to receive news from her father, but which for some time past she had expected in vain. The family had heard indirectly that he had landed at Vera Cruz in safety, and that he had proceeded to Mexico; but they had received no direct communication from him.

"Ah, there has been a great hurricane in the West Indies!" said Aunt Barbara with a most geographical look, "and that must be the reason; and as it has blown a whole island to pieces, it stands to reason that John's letter might have been carried away in the dilemma."

"But Mexico is not in the West Indies," said Abel very composedly, and perfectly recovered from the late discussion with Tom.

"There you're wrong, Abel," said Aunt Bab, "and I 'm sure I 'm right; for did not Mr. Wilkins, the great West India merchant, say last night that we were now in as great danger of losing our colonies as the Spaniards theirs? Now, it stands to reason that as all colonies are in the West Indies, Mexico must be in the West Indies also—any child will tell you that."

"So be it," said Abel with great resignation of look and voice; "but I am afraid that we must look to some more probable cause than the one you have assigned for the absence of John's letters."

"Nothing is so uncertain as the arrival of a ship-letter," said Edward, wishing thereby to give consolation to Mary's evident anxiety. "The Atlantic is but an indifferent post-road, and perhaps as many letters miscarry upon it as reach their destination in safety."

"Time will show," said Mary, with a tear starting in her eye, and suppressing a sigh; whilst Aunt Fanny, whose *idée fixe* had now become the absolute necessity of giving a something similar to what had been performed at the Woodbys, suddenly addressing herself to Tom, said, "Now, Mr. Woodby—now don't you think our lawn would do vastly well for dancing upon? You see we might illuminate the back of the kitchen so as to produce a fine effect, and the musicians might sit on the top of the cistern."

Tom seemed rather to turn up his nose at the proposal, thinking it a satire upon the grandeurs of his family mansion; but when Mary, throwing off her anxiety, joined in the scheme, and expressed her happiness at the bare idea of such an undertaking, he made an effort to look gracious; whilst Edward, forgetting their past controversies, readily entered upon the subject with zeal, and forthwith walking out upon the lawn, seemed willing to aid Fanny's ingenuity, and helped her to plan out all the details of the forthcoming festivities.

"Now, don't you see," said the spinster, "that we have plenty of room? Here we will dance—there will be the fiddlers—in that corner Betty can make the tea and the lemonade,—benches will be placed under the trees for repose, and the old folks may play at cards in the parlour."

"That will be delightful!" exclaimed Mary,

"But who will come?" said Tom in a tone of contempt;—"I should like to know who will come all this way for tea and lemonade."

"What can we have more?" again exclaimed Mary, looking up in despair at her aunt, and taking Tom's observation as oracular. "What shall we do? you know we cannot have a ball without dancers."

"No more we can," said Fanny, equally disturbed; then having, as she hoped, called up a bright thought, she exclaimed, "But we can manage something more—nothing is more easy; let us have a rout besides."

"Psha!" said Tom with ineffable contempt, as if he would say, "How ignorant of the world are you!"

"What is a rout?" said Mary.

"Lord Demone told me, I recollect very well," said Fanny, "that when a number of people are gathered together and fill a room so full that they can't move, they call that a rout."

"It is a very improper sort of an assembly," said Aunt Bab: "it consists of people being packed close together, and it stands to reason that must be improper."

"Indeed!" said Fanny; "I do not see that: you can't help people being men and women."

"What you mean," said Tom, addressing Aunt Fanny in a tone of superiority,—"What you mean is what we call in Erench a *soiry dansang*, or a dancing evening," pronouncing his French words with all the confidence of an academician.

"Exactly," said Fanny; "that's just what I meant;—we want something or other to dance."

"You may be certain," said Edward, "that whenever people are inclined to be sociable and good-natured, they will be happy to come to you upon any terms. As to those who are not, their absence is more to be desired than their presence wished for."

Tom surlily quitted the house; Edward lingered on for some time after, to say a few last words to Mary, and then left the inhabitants of Ivycote to the full enjoyment of a party of pleasure by anticipation.

CHAPTER XIX.

No follies are more regretted than those produced by one's own imprudence.

WHAT at first had only been a matter of mere speculation, in the course of a short time, from the force of circumstances, became one of necessity. It was very soon rumoured abroad that the Allnutts of Ivycote were about to give a ball, for that they had come to their own again—that they were determined to turn over a new leaf; and moreover, some of the wiser heads added that the beautiful Miss Mary was to marry the heir of Belvedere Hall. The first symptoms of the forthcoming muscular exercise broke out in the very house itself: old Betty informed Aunt Barbara of having heard it from Giles the postman—who had been assured of the circumstance by Mrs. Chaw, the chandler's wife—who had been told of it by the clarionet-player—who had had it from Mr. Napkin himself, the butler at Belvedere;—in short, it was plain, she said, "that a great dance was about setting in, and that therefore it was their province to prepare for it."

"That is very odd," said Aunt Bab; "it is very odd that Mrs. Shaw should know what I do not know myself."

"It may be odd," said old Betty, "but so it is—it is the general talk all over; and what is general, as the saying is, must be partikler somewheres."

"But it stands to reason," argued her mistress, "that if we do not know it—we who are to give the ball, others surely cannot."

"That may be," retorted the old servant; "but, for all that, it is likely to be true; because, as they all say, and true enough it be, that as Master John, God bless him! has got all the mines in Mexico on his hands, and so has got all the gold in the world, it is but right that the family

should hold up their heads again, and let the poor folks partake of their good fortune."

Aunt Barbara, who had hitherto allowed her sister and her niece to amuse their minds by planning the entertainment without ever having in her mind given her consent to it, was struck with the concluding observation of her old servant; and as any thing which could conduce to give pleasure to the poor was always certain to have great weight with her, without further balancing the expediency of the act, all at once she became favourably inclined to its execution. On that very morning at breakfast, the time when most family projects were discussed, she gave a hint that the one in question was not so impossible as at first was imagined. Abel stared, and again shook his head, as his sister made known her views; but Fanny's delight and zeal taking fire, she did not allow the subject to drop, but at once opened the whole scheme, in a speech which, had it been made in the assembly of the nation and upon some graver topic, might have given her fame and immortality. Mary seconded the motion, more by happiness of looks and charm of countenance than by words; and after an animated discussion upon what the nature of the festivities was to be, and upon those knotty points, the who and the how, and the where and the when, the determination might be said to be conclusive.

"I have been thinking," said Aunt Bab, "that we may begin the day's amusement by distributing flannel waistcoats and petticoats and worsted stockings to the old men and women of the parish, and giving roast beef and plum-pudding to the charity children, which will be very pretty among the potatoe-beds in the kitchen garden; and then, after that, we may dance on the green and drink syllabubs.

"But what shall we call it?" said Aunt Fanny, whose whole heart was set upon gentility. "It must be called something. We hear of archery meetings and musical meetings: we could not call it a flannel-petticoat meeting, could we? It would be new perhaps; but I do not think it would sound genteel, somehow. You know we must put something on the cards of invitation."

"Call it simply a ball," said Aunt Bab, "It stands to reason that when people are invited to dance, a ball is the consequence: they must know that, in order to put on dancing-shoes."

"Could we not call it a dance," said Mary very hum-

bly, "since it is to take place on the lawn? A ball, I believe, is generally performed in a room."

"I like your idea of syllabubs very much, Bab," said Fanny to her sister. "A cow may be introduced with great effect, with the tallest charity-girl dressed as a milk-maid. We might put syllabubs in one corner of the card, and dancing in the other: that, I think, would do very well, and be reckoned smartish."

"If that was the case," said Aunt Bab, "we might as well put 'flannel petticoats' in the middle: then all would be right."

"I tell you what," said Fanny, struck by a bright thought; "we had better consult Lady Thomson—she is at Belvedere now; and as she knows all that is right and proper to do, I am sure she will help us with her advice. Suppose Mary and I were to drive over to her this morning, and consult her and the Woodbys?"

"I think you would do very well," said Aunt Bab: "don't you think they would?" she said, addressing herself to Abel, who to this moment had not opened his lips.

"I think," said Abel, "if they were to consult some wiser heads than theirs, such heads would tell them 'Give no ball at all.'" He said this in a half-smiling, half-serious manner, not willing to check the spirits of his sisters and niece on the one hand, and still unwilling to conceal his own real sentiments on the other; for, in truth, he always had a misgiving that the prosperity which they actually enjoyed was not yet founded upon a sufficiently firm basis to allow of their launching out into expenses which might throw them out of their depth.

"My dear Abel," said Bab, who having acquiesced in the scheme, thought herself called upon to defend it,—"My dear Abel, surely you cant think of opposing yourself to what is likely to do the parish so much good and to give us so much pleasure! There is John, who is now making his fortune, and who, every body says, is likely to be one of the richest men of his day—surely he would not object to it: on the contrary, would not he be the first to set our plan going, and to insist upon our not living hugger-mugger for ever in this corner of ours without making others partake of our plenty? It stands to reason that nobody will invite us out if we do nothing for them in return; and have we not been at the Woodbys'—and is not dear Mary to be seen a bit—and arn't

the poor to have something to keep them warm in winter? Surely it stands to reason I'm right, and I am sure you think so too, only you dont like dancing yourself."

Abel, who was not in the smallest degree selfish, when he heard himself accused of so odious a feeling would have retorted with anger, but his usual mildness and forbearance coming to his aid, he said, "Bab, I was going to be angry, but I will not. If you lay my opposition to my distaste to dancing, I have no more to say. I thought you knew me better; and I also thought that you would have discovered the motives of my opposition to have been grounded on something more than a mere selfish feeling. Let the ball take place for pity's sake, and I will say no more against it."

Upon which Mary, whose affection for her uncle was one of the leading feelings of her heart, went up to him, and throwing her arms round his neck, kissed him with the most tender demonstrations of love and respect.

Aunt Fanny, and Mary by her side, drove to Belvedere in the course of the morning. Engrossed as they were with the object of their visit, it was only when they began to approach the house that Mary recollected suddenly that she was about to see Edward; and the blush which overspread her face, had a keen observer been present, would have disclosed to him what she yet scarcely knew herself—that her affections were in a fair way of becoming irretrievably engaged. Her apprehensions that her visit might be interpreted otherwise than it was meant, were quieted on perceiving at a distance several sportsmen with dogs and fowling-pieces gliding through a distant wood, in one of whom she recognised Edward; and this discovery giving her confidence, she and her aunt alighted at the door, and were soon ushered into the presence of Lady Thomson, Mrs. Woodby and her daughters.

These ladies, with that quickness of comprehension belonging to women, having already received intimation of the project in contemplation, exchanged glances when Aunt Fanny and her niece were announced, and received them with every demonstration of a hearty welcome. After a certain proportion of deviations from the straight line, Fanny all at once came to the point by saying, "We have been so much delighted with our day at Belvedere, that we have been thinking that we might do something also, and we want you to give us your advice: it would

be very good-natured of you, Lady Thomson—you who know these matters well, if you would just look in upon us and see what can be done."

Mrs. Woodby looked grave at this appeal to Lady Thomson, when she esteemed herself the higher authority; Lady Thomson began to swell with increased dignity at receiving so great a compliment to her judgment; and the two young ladies started up in rapture at the prospect of the proposed gaiety.

"I shall be charmed, I am sure," said Lady Thomson; "for in justice to myself I must say, that having had a good deal to do in that line both at Cheltenham and at Bath, my hints may not perhaps be entirely useless."

"How charming! how delightful!" exclaimed Anne Woodby.

"I dare say it will be very nice," sighed Ellen.

"I don't see where you can ever find room," sternly pronounced Mrs. Woodby, "to give anything beyond tea and cards,—and that does not require much management."

"Of course," said Aunt Fanny, venturing her scrap of French, "it can only be in the *petit* way; but we think, with a little coaxing, we can make it *joli* also."

"Let us see," said Mrs. Woodby: "you have got a bit of lawn, a quarter of an acre of kitchen-garden, some cucumber-beds that run up to the back of the pig-sty, and your green-house; you can't do much out of that."

"But we have trees on the lawn," said Aunt Fanny, rather bridling up at this attack upon their premises, "and we have benches under them; and everybody agrees they look pretty. Then we have a great deal of laurel at the back of the kitchen, with some very pretty ivy that covers the long chimney: all that will come in very well with lamps and festoons. Then, you know, when dancing is going on on the green, cards and tea may be going on in the parlour; and a very good place may be managed for the music on the great cistern. And then you know——"

"Nothing can be said," observed Lady Thomson, cutting Fanny short, "until we have seen the place; and although its dimensions may be small, still much may be done, when good taste and judgment are brought into its aid."

"Taste and judgment, and all that sort of thing, do very well in a place like this," said Mrs. Woodby, evi-

dently quite sore; "and although I say it who should not, nobody will deny that it was very well done here and handsomely too: but really at Ivycote, it is too much to expect great things there"

"La! mamma, you mistake," exclaimed Anne Woodby. "Miss Fanny, you know, said it was to be in the *petit* line; and that is the contrary of great. You know we danced in the great vat at the brewery at Liverpool —at Edward Manby's uncle's, I mean—and that was small enough in conscience, and still we were all very merry."

"Well, well, we shall see," said her mother; "I am sure any thing we can do we shall be happy to do, and welcome; and so, Miss Fanny," addressing her with a protecting air, "pray let us know when you can receive us, and we will drive over and hold a consultation on the spot."

It was settled accordingly, that on the following day the ladies present should proceed to luncheon at Ivycote, and there decide what might be done.

When Aunt Fanny and Mary were gone, Mrs. Woodby exclaimed, "Well, I can't think what can possess some folks, who have scarcely got enough to make both ends meet, to be thinking upon giving of balls!—they must be all stark staring mad. I always thought Aunt Bab, as they call her, to be a sensible sort of body; but she is as great a fool as her sister, I declare! As for Mary, the niece, she is a poor simpleton, and of course would dance any where when she could meet our Tom: but *that* will never do—that's what it shan't."

"I wish it were so," thought Ellen in her inmost mind.

"La! mamma, how you do talk," exclaimed Anne. "I declare Mary has no more thoughts of Tom than she has of the Lord Mayor; she is a simpleton though, and if love is, it is not there."

Lady Thomson wound up the conclave by one of her knock-me-down speeches, in which she put herself forward at every turn of sentence, destroying all Mrs. Woodby's vapourings by quoting great names and authorities—Cheltenham and Bath, and by deciding "that every body knew their own affairs best, and that in justice to herself she must say that she made it a point, and she laid it down as a rule, never to meddle in the affairs of others."

The next day proved to be one of those hot, suffocating days which occasionally seem to make up for a long succession of chilling damp weather by a short exhibition of concentrated heat. At twelve o'clock Lady Thomson and Mrs. Woodby, both presenting a superficies over which the sun delights to shed its beams, and the two Miss Woodbys, ascended the carriage. It was long since so hot a day had been known. The carriage was open, their parasols were open, and so were their pores. During the drive, the heat, the dust, and their own unexplainable miseries so co-operated to derange the good humour in which they had set out, that by the time they reached their destination they were more like beings condemned to undergo punishment than reasonable creatures proceeding to decide upon the affairs of pleasure. Although Bab had spread her cleanest tablecloth and her most alluring of luncheons, nothing was talked of but the heat, the dust, and the miseries of driving to such a distance on such a day.

"Oof!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodby, blowing freely from her lungs, and at the same time using her pocket-handkerchief as an absorbent. "Well, I declare, if I had known this, nothing should have taken me out this day!"

"Really," said Aunt Barbara with her well-bred quaintness, "I am quite sorry that you have been incommoded —pray take something to cool you. And you, Lady Thomson," addressing that lady,—is there any thing that you would like after your hot drive? 'Twas so good of you to come!"

"The carriage was so small," said Lady Thomson, "that really my sleeves have been quite flattened into regular frights;" and then, dusting herself the while, her face being in its bright crimson a counterpart of Mrs. Woodby's she continued, "I do believe that you have more dust in this part of the country than in any other: your roads ought really to be endited—it is such white dust too!"

"My bonnet will be spoiled," exclaimed Anne as she blew off the dust and adjusted the ribands."

"I am sure I don't care about mine," said Ellen.

The falling of the wind stops the raging of the sea: so a cool parlour and appropriate refreshments helped much to allay the heat of body and irritation of mind of the oppressed ladies. But as a swell continues to upheave the waters long after the storm has ceased, so did the

soothing attentions which they received mitigate, but not entirely remove the irritation. That this was the case was evident as soon as Aunt Fanny led Mrs. Woodby and Lady Thomson to the spot where their ingenuity was to be exercised.

"Did not I tell you that there was not room enough here to turn about in, much less to dance? I don't think you ever can make any thing out of this."

"Then allow me to say you're mistaken," said Lady Thomson. "Have not I seen a *fête champêtre* given in a little back garden in many a street in Bath? and why it should not be given here, I do not see.—We shall do vastly well," she added, turning towards Aunt Fanny, "and you 'll be able to get up something mighty tasty. I think you might throw out a temporary room out of that window (pointing to the one which threw light upon the homely staircase,) which might be filled up with draperies, and statues, and candelabras, and those sort of things. But, my dear, to do that you must pull down that horrid fright of a chimney—that stands terribly in the way."

"Pull down the kitchen chimney?" exclaimed Aunt Bab in an agony of fright.

"Ay, my dear," said the inexorable Lady Thomson, standing with her hands resting on each hip, "indeed you must—down comes that chimney as sure as fate."

"But it can't be," said poor Aunt Bab, turning with dismay towards Mrs. Woodby; "you know we must have our chimney."

"Your chimney! ah, to be sure," exclaimed Mrs. Woodby, tossing up her nose in triumph, "to be sure you must have your chimney! It does not signify talking, Lady Thomson; I told you before, and I say so now, that you might as well try to dance in the pigsties at Belvedere Hall as to get up a ball here."

"You surely are not going to put your judgment in competition with mine!" said the other; "upon such matters mine was never doubted. I would not allow that chimney to stand if I were to die for it: in justice to myself, I would not."

"Some people may think themselves mighty clever," retorted Mrs. Woodby, "and knock people's chimneys about as if they were so many nine-pins; but I am sure they should not knock mine about. After having given a thing myself, I may be allowed to have an opinion."

In this manner did these two authorities upon taste debate, until they had excited their respective tempers into such a state of animosity that it made the quiet possessors of the chimney in dispute seriously wish that they would leave the house without further discussion. Aunt Bab undertook to sooth Lady Thomson by admitting that the chimney was in the way; Aunt Fanny agreed with Mrs. Woodby that the place was small, and gave every superiority she could desire to Belvedere; whilst Mary entertained the Miss Woodbys upon such subjects as are apt to fill the minds of young ladies when dress and dancing are in the wind, until the carriage was ordered, and the visiters returned whence they came.

CHAPTER XX.

When misfortunes occur, they are often sent at such times as to produce the strongest impression.

Although Aunt Bab had been not a little frightened at the destructive propensities exhibited by Lady Thomson as a preliminary to the festivities in contemplation, and out of affection for the old family chimney had almost resolved in her mind to give up all idea of carrying the project further, yet, upon canvassing the subject more in detail, she found that the village and the country in general were already so much 'up' about it, as it is said, that she found it impossible to secede without incurring all sorts of discreditable imputations. To knock down the chimney was impossible,—in short, the whole family cried out shame at the very idea; but Aunt Fanny's mind had been so much bitten by the alluring prospect of a temporary room with draperies and festoons, that it was determined, instead of turning the great cistern into an orchestra, to erect the said piece of finery upon it, and dismantling the staircase window, thus give an easy access, and secure an appropriate place for the display of the supper. They also hoped thus to conciliate Lady Thomson, and at the same time to secure the quiet possession of the chimney. Uncle Abel shook his head as he turned over the costs in his own mind; but the event was now become

inevitable: reason, common sense, and, what was still more urgent, the banker's book—every thing opposed it; but what fortitude was ever able to stand against the wishes of women, influential servants, the butcher and chandler and baker's wives, and, what is still more irresistible,—"What will the world say?"

The peaceable mansion of Ivycote all at once became the abode of noisy masons and carpenters; the lawn and grounds were usurped by arbiters of taste; drapers and dealers in tinsel hung about the unpretending apartments, and cooks took possession of every avenue leading to the kitchen.

The important affair of invitations and the issuing of cards occupied the inmates. The discussions to which this subject gave rise were, as usual, long and various. Aunt Bab was for asking every body, for her generous heart scarcely would admit of distinctions, particularly of those distinctions which afflict the souls of those whom the world call select; but Aunt Fanny was determined to be genteel, and therefore her exclusions were advanced with the utmost pertinacity. When Mary, with all humility, put in a word in favour of little Betsy Cruikshank, the village attorney's daughter, who she avowed, had never danced but to the sound of a boy's whistling, and who longed to be present at a real ball, Aunt Fanny exclaimed that that could never be; because that, if little Betsy came, then the Silverstops and Thickentales would expect to be invited too; and if they came, all the parish must come, and then all the neighbourhood would be offended. The utmost she could grant to Mary's petition was, that Betsy might be allowed to come in and help to 'wash up;' and then if an opportunity should offer, she might be thrust into a country dance and welcome, provided always that her hands were not too hot, and that she did not make too much of a clatter with her heels in footing it.

It had been settled by the authorities of Belvedere that the most appropriate word as applied to existing circumstances would be a 'breakfast,' and with that indefinite designation the invitations were issued. It would require the jargon of a newspaper writer to describe the complete transmutation that took place both in the exterior and the interior of the homely cottage of the Allnutts, now that it was prepared for the promised festivities. He would inform you "that the tasty and elegant suite thrown

open on this occasion consisted of the hall, the drawing-room, the breakfast-parlour, and the dining-room; the one ornamented with exotics of the most costly character; the next fitted up with draperies *à l'antique*, resplendent with mirrors and or-molu; the third, a bijou, fascinating the senses by its exquisite models of art and virtù; and the fourth exhibiting to the astonished eye all that could entice the palate and excite the appetite, the viands being provided without any consideration to expense, the wines of the first-rate description, and the fruits so choice and various that none but royalty could ever expect to vie with either their quality or profusion." He would then go on to describe the temporary dancing-room where Terpsichore was expected to appear on the 'light fantastic toe,' and the lawns laid out more like the Garden of the Hesperides than any thing that could at present be produced in this sublunary scene.—But we will return to plain prose, to say that the snug cottage had been turned into the most tawdry, vulgar, and uncomfortable habitation that the imagination can conceive, but which to the eyes and imagination of its possessors appeared the *ne plus ultra* of fashion and magnificence. Aunt Bab applauded the surprising art of the cooks; Fanny roamed with exultation through the flowers and draperies; Mary bounded about with all the joyousness of a child; and even Uncle Abel himself seemed to catch the infection, and wondered how the decrepid mahogany, the old black-bottomed chairs, the threadbare carpets, the washed-out curtains, had disappeared, and how they had been replaced by bright colours and shining furniture. As for the servants, they seemed to be at their wits' ends. Old Betty did nothing but escort the gaping neighbours in long processions to view the wonders of the place; whilst honest Brown looked more alarmed than charmed at an event which seemed to place his humble exterior at variance with the splendour of the house. Mrs. Chaw, as she viewed the display, promised to herself to increase her prices; the butcher's wife hoped for a future increase of custom; and Mrs. Humphries flattered herself that she might demand an advance of salary. Merriday, the schoolmaster, planned a copy of verses; and Cruikshank looking grave, thought that something might be forthcoming for his profession.

The morning at length came, and every thing beamed with pleasure and gaiety at Ivycote. Aunt Bab wore her

grey gown; Aunt Fanny did her best to revive the last remains of her beauty by enlisting every bit of finery which her wardrobe could afford to her aid; and Mary, whose thoughts would involuntarily revert to Edward Manby at every glance which she cast on her glass, came to the scene of action brilliant in youth and beauty, and graceful in simplicity of attire. Lady Thompson, who gave herself the airs of lady patroness, accompanied by the Woodbys, were the first to arrive, and were soon followed by a long train of company, who all seemed to be bursting with curiosity to see what could be done by the Allnutts in their nutshell. Various were the speculations on foot regarding this new position which they had taken; for they had hitherto lived in such perfect seclusion, that their names, which once were well known throughout the country, had almost been entirely forgotten. Some of the old people who remembered the family well went through their genealogy, their marriages and intermarriages, with learned exactitude; gave the history of their ruin and downfall, and now wondered at their rise. Others criticised with all the candour of envy and malevolence, and while they professed to admire, finished by condemning. The good-natured hoped that their liberality would not be misplaced; those who were not so, condemned this display as ostentatious and ill-judged, and, considering their scanty means, as even wicked.

"If they think to catch Tom Woodby for Mary," said one Mrs. Candour to Mrs. Gossipall, "although she is no doubt a pretty girl, they will be wofully mistaken;—Tom is not such a fool. Besides, Mrs. Woodby and Lady Thomson are determined he shall get something in return for the fortune he is to have. No family knows better how many ounces go to a pound than the Woodbys."

"She is pretty," said the other; "but, la! what is beauty after all? doesn't it come one day and go the other? Look at old Fanny—she was once a beauty, but what is now left only serves to make a fool of her and the laughing-stock of all the county."

In the mean while, the business of the day began with every appearance of the most decided success. The pleasures which it was about to bring forth were sanctified by acts of charity to the poor, and by a substantial meal to the charity children, in the superintendence of which Aunt Bab shone conspicuous, whilst she left the care of the gaieties to her sister and niece. As the day wore away,

and when the time for dancing had arrived, the music struck up, and the scene assumed an appearance of the most lively gaiety and bustle. Edward, to the mortification of his rival Tom, had secured Mary for his partner; and never were two mortals happier than they during the time which they passed in each other's society. So exhilarating was the scene, that Abel himself, forgetting the cold calculations of prudence, seemed to have been changed into another being. He was attentive to every body's wants, and seemed to take pleasure in doing all in his power to promote the pleasures of the day.

He was in the very act of plunging his knife into a large pasty, when honest Brown, without any of that tact which men of his cloth are apt to possess, thrust into his hand a letter, which had been brought by the postman. Abel glanced at it, and discovered that it bore upon it the London post-mark, and that it came from his banker. Mr. Woodby, who was present, and who had been eagerly waiting for his share of the pasty, also cast his eye upon the letter, which, practised as he was in such matters, equally told him came from a London banker. Had any keen observer been present to have watched the countenances of both these men upon a circumstance which apparently was of small importance, he would have remarked expressions very remote from those of indifference. Approaching misfortunes frequently cast their shadows before—the mind, apprehensive of evil, is ever on the watch—Abel looked disturbed, and without exactly knowing why, he almost feared to open the letter. Woodby put on a look of entire carelessness, and vociferated for his share of the pasty with unusual merriment. Neither Bab nor Fanny had seen the arrival of the letter—Abel alone, besides the bearer thereof and Mr. Woodby, was aware of its existence, and he had sufficient power over himself to continue his duties at the table until he could unobserved absent himself: he then glided into his bed-room, and locking the door after him, read as follows:—

"Lombard-street.

"To Abel Allnut, Esq.

"Sir,—We have the honour to inform you, for your government, that by a recent communication made to us by Messrs. Baggs and Bubbleby, agents for the Mexican Loan, of which you are a shareholder, they inform us that

the payments on account of the dividends upon that loan have been suspended, and will so continue until further notice.

"We are, Sir,

"Your obedient humble servants,

"LONGHEADS & Co."

His eyes scarcely served him to read to the end of this short letter: they seemed to have lost their power; as he held it in his hand, it appeared like a blank piece of paper, and he stood like one dreaming with his eyes open. The scene which he had just left, the noises which rang in his ears, the transition from merriment to despair brought on by the reception of this letter, had so bewildered his senses, that in vain he endeavoured to recollect himself—could not shake himself from the conviction that he was dreaming. At length, slowly recovering, the whole truth broke upon him in all its horror: all that he had so often in the silence of his heart anticipated, was come to pass; their short-lived prosperity was over, and ruin had overtaken them. He read the letter over and over again, slowly meditating over each word; and then, when satisfied that he could not be mistaken, he sank upon his knees and poured out his heart in feelings of resignation to the Author of his being. He prayed earnestly for a renewal of strength in support of the weakness and frailty of his nature, and much did he require it at that particular moment; for the noise of music and revelry which rose from below, acting upon his frenzied mind like the spur applied to the sides of the galled and distressed steed, would nearly have deprived him of reason, had he not had recourse to that only effectual source of comfort. He arose calm and collected, folded up the fatal letter with firmness of demeanour, and then returned to the festive scene with the determination to allow nothing to disturb its continuation to the last. He would have looked gay, had it been in his power; but he could not shake off the grave look which, in spite of himself, had taken possession of his face. On his return to the table, Mr. Woodby was the first to read his looks, and he could too well explain the cause of their altered appearance; but instead of respecting the grief which he knew must exist in his breast, the unfeeling, vulgar-minded man, by way of a blind, exclaimed as he filled a bumper, "Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to propose a toast: here's a health to Major Allnutt, and success to Mexico!"

These words were caught up and echoed back with enthusiasm by every one present, for all were anxious to express feelings of good-will towards their hosts; but they acted upon Abel like a shock of palsy. He could scarcely master his wounded feelings: the sense of the ruin which hung over him and his sisters, and which was so much accelerated by the heavy expenses which they had incurred on this occasion, rushed upon his mind with such hideous forebodings of imagination, that, instead of returning Mr. Woodby's compliment and the kind greetings of his friends, he sat insensible and unmoved. He only recovered when he heard Barbara's voice exclaiming, with an unusual tone of merriment in its accent, "Abel, what is the matter with you! don't you hear?—arn't you more than flattered? It is your turn to speak: if ever you were merry in your life, now is your time."

The stricken man, making one desperate effort over himself, filled up to his own drinking a bumper of wine, which on other occasions he never touched, and drinking it off, roared out in a manner which astonished every one, a rhapsody of words more like the ravings of a madman than the calm self-possession of an orator; and these having been received as an expression of his thanks, all the world were agreed that gaiety had done Mr. Allnutt a vast deal of good, and that there was nothing like dissipation to bring out a man's latent energies. The wine, however, which he had thus drunk produced a useful effect—it brought on heavy stupefaction, which kept his senses in a dreaming state, and thus preserved him from dwelling upon the sad reality of his position. He soon became a source of merriment to the more sober guests. His sisters were surprised; but attributing this excess to the temptation of being convivial, they smiled, when before they would have been horrified, and therefore left him to himself. But Mary, whose whole heart was wrapt in her affection for her uncle, and who, having seen him return to table after his visit to his bed-room, had remarked the change which had taken place in his countenance and appearance, and had also paid attention to his subsequent conduct. She felt a bitter pang on perceiving his situation, and became alarmed that all was not right—that something of serious import must have happened so suddenly to produce such a change. Forgetting the delight of Edward's conversation, she hung about Abel for the rest of the evening, and endeavoured by her questions and entreaties to discover what could have

happened. Was he well? had he received any bad news? had he heard any thing from her father? All these questions she asked in their turn; but she received no other answer than a doleful shake of the head.

At length the festivities with the day drew to a close. As the last carriage drove off, Aunt Fanny, as if anticipating futurity, exclaimed with a sigh, "It's all over!—Well, it has been our first, and I suppose will be our last."

Aunt Bab was overflowing with joy, for she had received Lady Thomson's and Mrs. Woodby's warmest approbation; the former of whom assured her she had never seen any thing better done even at Cheltenham; and the latter, without showing the least envy, exclaimed, "I declare I could not have done better myself had I set about it—and all too without knocking down the chimney!"

Abel had retreated to his room as early as he could with decency; and when his sisters inquired after him, Mary with a dejected look remarked that she was afraid that her uncle was not well, for that he looked miserable, and had gone to his room, she was afraid, with a bad headach.

"It stands to reason," exclaimed Bab, "that he is not quite right—he has never been accustomed to such gay doings; and that bumper of wine, which he took off like so much water, it was too much for him! But he will be well to-morrow; a good dose of camomile will set him to rights if nothing else will, and he shall take it to-morrow morning the first thing on getting up."

Mary shook her head; Fanny took one long survey of the scene of the expired gaiety, and went to bed; Bab lingered till the last lights were extinguished, and the cottage was again restored to its usual quiet.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Allnutts catch a glimpse of the ruin which awaits them. The simple-minded are helpless before the worldly wise.

ABEL passed a sleepless night; his mind was filled with apprehension for the future, and owing to his inexperience of the world and his ignorance of what is called business, he was uncertain what might be the extent of the misfortune so inopportunely announced to him. The length of time which had elapsed since he had received tidings of his brother added much to his present affliction; for to his advice he would naturally have had recourse. Trying in vain to seek some relief to his anxiety by sleep, almost ere the day had dawned he arose, dressed himself, and leaving his bedroom, with noiseless steps descended into the rooms below; and there the traces of the late scene of gaiety and feasting were spread far and wide as if to upbraid him for having sanctioned so much folly, waste, and extravagance. He wandered over the deserted, dusty, and gaudy rooms, and glided by the disordered tables spread over with the remnants of the supper, like the Genius of Desolation hovering over departed grandeur. "What will become of us all!" he would frequently exclaim in mental agony; and then recovering himself, would again with folded hands reverently exclaim, "God's will be done!" He apprehended evils greater in magnitude than perhaps they really were, and looked upon immediate starvation as a matter of course after the immediate loss of revenue. In his own mind, so far as regarded himself, he determined to gain his bread without shrinking from the humiliation; but when he reflected upon the situation of his sisters and niece, he wrung his hands in despair —for what could they do?

Mary was the first to make her appearance; but as she came bounding down the staircase into the parlour, her steps were suddenly arrested by observing the wan and woe-stricken looks of her uncle. She paused, and approaching him with caution, took his hand, and inquiring after his health, looked into his face with a beseeching look. Abel was not prepared to answer her questions, but inquired whether her aunts were likely soon to appear. Mary immediately ran up to hasten their steps, saying "that she

was afraid her uncle was not well, and that he required their immediate attendance." Barbara very soon appeared, followed by Fanny; the one bent upon exerting her best medical skill, and the other fearful lest so doleful a result should be a bar to future gaiety: but they no sooner began to ascertain the nature of his disorder, than he stopped all further proceedings by taking the fatal letter from his pocket and desiring Barbara to read it.

"What can this mean?" said she; catching the apprehension expressed in Abel's face: "what has happened? Is John dead?"

"Read," said Abel; "you will soon see."

Barbara read aloud: "Sir,—We have the honour to inform you for your government—"

"*For your government!*" exclaimed Bab; "that can't be for you. You may be certain that here is some mistake."

"Read on," said Abel.

Barbara read to the end of the letter, and then pondering for some time, she said: "You may be certain that you are under a mistake. You are told here that the information given is '*for your government.*'—Does it not stand to reason, that if it is for the Government, it is not for you?"

"What have I to do with Government?" said Abel despondingly.

"Who knows?" said Bab; "you may have a great deal to do—you may be somebody without your knowing it. Why should these men tell you that they write for your Government?—they must have some meaning in what they say."

"It may be a banker's phrase," said Abel, "the meaning of which you know nothing about. But the long and short of it is, that the payment of our dividends is stopped, and that we have at present no means of paying for our daily bread: we are paupers."

"Paupers!" exclaimed Fanny in utter dismay.

"Paupers?" echoed Bab; and then pausing awhile, she continued, saying: "But this can never be! Abel, you must be out of your senses! Consider a little. This letter does not come from John. When we hear him tell us that we are paupers, then I will believe it, but not till then; he surely never would have planned our ruin, and therefore why should we believe what the foolish bankers write? Believe me, you must be a Government man without your knowing it."

"What have the bankers to do with John?" retorted Abel;

"their business is with us and our money. If they do not choose to make us any more payments, which they here say they will not, then we starve: nothing can be clearer."

"But this can never be!" again exclaimed Barbara, apparently struck by a bright thought: "if somebody is not to be paid, it is Mr. Woodby: he it was who managed the business for us, and he ought to suffer—it stands to reason that he ought."

"My dear Barbara," said Abel with the deepest tone of resignation, "if it be God's will that we meet with misfortunes, do not let us repine, or lay blame where none exists; but rather let us receive the blow with fortitude. As for Mr. Woodby's share in the transaction, he advised us for the best; we sought him, he did not seek us: and as I dare say he will advise us for the best again, being conversant in money transactions, it is my opinion that we immediately lay our case before him and be guided in our conduct by what he may advise."

"Let us go instantly," said Barbara, highly excited by apprehension of the impending ruin, but still secretly cherishing a conviction that her first impression upon reading the bankers' letter was the true one. "I am sure there is something more in those words about the Government, Abel," she added, "than you are aware of. I should not be surprised if John had made you a man of consequence without your knowing it. Who knows! you may be treasurer, or overseer, or some such thing to Mexico; and the bankers may be privy to it although you are not. But let us go to Mr. Woodby: I dare say he will know all about it, and tell us how we may take the law of the Mexican Government; for it stands to reason that something must be done."

During this conversation Aunt Fanny's face had gradually been lengthening its features, until scarcely able to control her feelings at this sudden prospect of ruin, she exclaimed, "Barbara, you wouldn't surely tell Mr. Woodby? Why Mrs. Woodby, and Lady Thomson, and all the parish will know it before the day is over. What will they say? and just after the balls, too!"

"Fanny," said Abel, "be not a child! the first step towards the diminution of misfortune is to know how to bear it. Of what use are all the lessons of submission and resignation which our parents taught us from our infancy if they are not to be put into practice? Let the world do and say what it pleases—let our care be to do what is right."

Fanny sat down, looking around her upon the relics of yesterday's gaiety, the picture of despair. Mary crept to

her uncle's side, and with tears shining in her expressive eyes; although a melancholy smile was on her face, she seemed to say—for she was silent—"Depend upon me for my endeavours to do credit to your instructions!" Her mind involuntarily glanced at the thought of possessing in Edward Manby a friend who would never desert them in their need, and a bright gleam of consolation darted across her mind as she made an inward appeal for protection to the Author of her being.

As soon as the necessary preparation for their excursion to Belvidere Hall could be made, Barbara and Abel took their departure, much to the astonishment of old Betty and the servants who had already began to suspect that something of importance had occurred.

They arrived at the house when the family were at breakfast, and were straightway ushered into the breakfast room, much to the astonishment of every one present excepting Mr. Woodby, who no sooner perceived them and caught a glimpse of their solemn features than he immediately guessed the nature of their errand. Mrs. Woodby and Lady Thomson exchanged glances of astonishment, and then began a course of inquiry which extremely puzzled Aunt Bab in framing such answers as might at once save her veracity and preserve her secret. She entrenched herself in general assertions, saying that something had occurred which had made them seek Mr. Woodby's advice upon a point of business; that the South Americans had behaved in such a shameful manner to them, that they ought to be sued in the court of chancery without loss of time.

Mr. Woodby, having had time to reflect upon the part it was expedient to take, and having finished his last cup of tea, invited them to follow him into his closet; where having duly pressed them to be seated, he inquired of Abel in what manner he might serve him.

Abel immediately unfolded the bankers' letter, and placed it in Mr. Woodby's hands; but before he could even adjust his spectacles or throw himself into a proper attitude for giving advice, Aunt Barbara exclaimed, "Now this letter can't be for Abel, Mr, Woodby; it is '*for his government.*' He is either a Government man, or it is nonsense; now is it not so?"

"Let Mr. Woodby read," said Abel calmly.

Woodby read the letter through, and then looking alarmingly grave, shook his head and said, "This is an awkward business."

"But what is the meaning of the words '*for your government*?'" said Barbara with the greatest eagerness of look and voice.

"That is a mere commercial phrase," said Woodby, "one that is now almost gone by in good writing, and has nothing to do with the main business."

Barbara's face fell into a look of hopeless dejection; for greatly as she had been excited by hope, so much the more did she now sink into despair.

"What is to be done?" said Abel.

Woodby, making one of those faces which so often indicate a ponderous oration, and pulling off his spectacles at the same time, said, "Why, you see, these new States have as yet but little idea of the sacred nature of loans, or public credit, which is the same thing; and therefore if they can't pay their dividends, why they won't. A rich country like England where the consols yield but little for one's money, and where there is a great accumulation of capital, or indeed cash, jumps at a new country that wants what she has got, and lends with her eyes blindfolded, as one may say; although Mexico in truth is good security, because she has mines, or gold and silver in the raw state, and will, I make no doubt, pay all in good time, although at present she may be a little hard up or so. Therefore, you see, you may feel safe about your money ultimately, although you will get none just now."

"But it is just now that we happen to want it," said Abel; "for the whole of our fortune is involved in the Mexican funds, as you well know."

"Yes," said Barbara, who began to rouse from her state of dejection—"Yes, you must well know it, for you recommended us to place it there, and you insisted upon yielding to us your shares."

"Yes, madam," said Woolby with great self-complacency, "I did so; and happy I was to be able to serve a friend, particularly after the recommendation of your own brother: but everybody is aware that foreign stocks are not like our own: they yield more, 'tis true; but then they are ticklish—one can't lay one's head upon them and go to sleep."

"But you told Abel, Mr. Woodby," said the pertinacious Barbara, "that putting one's money in the Mexican funds was like eating one's cake and keeping it too. Now, I am afraid that we shall never see it again."

"As for that, ma'am," said Woodby, looking a shade less composed, "it is true that I thought well of Mexico, and

do so still, for the country is as full of gold and silver as an egg is of meat; but I trusted in their good faith as a nation or government, and if they don't know what public credit means, am I to blame? if they won't pay, I can't make them. We should call it being bankrupt, whatever they may do."

"We are quite aware," said Abel in a tone of great conciliation, "that you did for the best, and advised us for the best; and as we are quite sure that you will do so again, we are come to seek your advice and to request you to tell us what we ought to do. We are ignorant of the nature of money transactions, and we request you to instruct us in the fittest course to pursue."

We do not wish our readers to conclude that there was anything in Mr. Woodby's conduct in the money transaction in question which might have been objected to on the Stock Exchange, or which would not have been fully acquitted before any commercial tribunal; but when he came to consider that it might be canvassed to his disadvantage in the country, and a wrong light thrown upon it, we must be permitted to assert that the advice which he now gave was very much biassed by selfish considerations.

"Why," said he, again making up a face, "this is an awkward business, there is no doubt of that—misfortunes at a distance always look greater than they really are. Here are you at Ivycote, and your bankers, and your money, and all your means of living, are in London, some hundred and eighty miles off; and you will be fretting and fussing yourselves, daily anxious for news, and daily being disappointed. Now, my advice is this: go straight to London—make the bankers your object—watch events—wait there till things take a turn. In my various transactions in the City, I have always remarked, that if things go wrong at one time they are sure to come right at another, and particularly in stocks: like buckets in a well, if the Bulls were at the top at one season, the Bears were sure to be looking out of the bucket in the next. So is your business: you may be depressed now, but all will come right in time. Go to London without loss of time—look after your own concerns; and although I shall be distressed to lose you as a neighbour, yet still it is better to know you are happy at a distance than miserable next door.

When this speech was over, Abel and Barbara looked at each other with mute significancy, so total, so new, and so unexpected was the change which such a proceeding would

produce in their whole being. They sat dumb for some time, until at length Barbara exclaimed, "Go to London! Why, how shall we ever get to London?—and when we are there, how are we ever to find our way to the place where our Mexican stock is?—we know no one there. Besides, how can we ever leave Ivycote? have we not lived here almost all our lives? Every tie we have in the world is here—we know no one except those who live here and hereabouts. It will break our hearts to leave our dear home—and at my age how am I to acquire new habits? Must we positively leave it?" she said with tears in her eyes and with a face that would have melted a heart of stone.

"We must go, I see that," said Abel after a long and affecting pause: "there is no help for it."

"Indeed," said Woodby, "there is nothing in London that a child might not do. Why, you will like it when you have been there a day or two; and a change of scene will do you all good for a little while, when let us hope that you will come back again to Ivycote better than ever."

"Fanny will like it for one, I see that," said Bab more composed.

Upon this, the brother and sister took their leave, with their hearts and minds full almost to bursting of conflicting emotions, but with their determination made up upon the necessity of leaving their long-cherished home. Woodby saw them depart with no little satisfaction, for in his speculating mind he could foresee in their absence many circumstances which would turn to his own advantage.

CHAPTER XXII.

The first introduction of the simple and unpractised to the ways of the town.

When Barbara and Abel returned to the cottage, they found Fanny and Mary, with old Betty and honest Brown, waiting for them with outstretched necks and faces anxious to learn the result of their visit.

"We must go to London this minute," said Bab: "there is nothing else left for it!"

The extraordinary sensation which this announcement

made upon those who heard it may be more easily imagined than described, when it is recollected that scarcely one of them had ever stirred beyond the immediate neighbourhood of their village. "Go to London!" was echoed and re-echoed by every mouth, whilst each person was impressed by a different sensation in saying it.

Fanny cried and laughed by turns with nervous excitement and bewildering thought; Mary looked at her uncle and aunts to catch their feelings, and to adapt herself in ready obedience to their wishes; old Betty thought the end of the world was about to take place; and honest Brown stood stiff, with his hands down his sides, like one impaled.

Before the day was over—ay, before an hour had elapsed, the news had spread all over the village, that the South Americans had used Miss Barbara so ill, that she and Mr. Abel were going to London immediately to have them up before the Chancellor. This having taken place precisely the day after the ball, naturally made every one suppose that this untoward event had occurred during the entertainment; and to those who were unpractised in geography, it appeared that these unmannerly savages had actually been insolent to the lady in her own house.

The character of Abel by this event seemed all at once developed into manliness and activity, and he became an instance of the useful influence which responsibility exercises upon the mind. Impressed with a sense of the duties that had devolved upon him as the protector of his sisters, he at once shook off those habits of seclusion which he had so much cherished, and bestirred himself the first and foremost to meet with firmness the ruin that now stared them in the face. He directed everything, provided for every contingency, and showed himself as full of sagacity as he was, alas! of inexperience in the ways of the world. It was concerted between them that he and Barbara should first proceed to London in order to ascertain the position of their affairs, and that then they would decide whether to return to Ivycote, or, sending for Fanny and Mary, to quit that place entirely and establish themselves in London until they could reinstate themselves with comfort and respectability. They thought it right to take old Cruikshank, the village attorney, into their councils; who, when he heard of their position, immediately recalled to mind his own prophetical exclamation upon inspecting the preparations for the ball; and, attached as he was to them by long acquaintance, he determined to do his best to serve them. He was installed as

their agent in case of need; and as he knew that Abel had no acquaintance in London who could help him upon a first arrival, he gave him a letter to a nephew of his, one Mark Woodcock, a youth established as clerk to an eminent solicitor in Lincoln's inn.

The short time which elapsed between their determination to depart and the moment of getting into the coach that was to convey Abel and his sister to London was passed in an unceasing expression of hopes and fears, of anticipations of pleasure, of apprehensions of danger, such as may be supposed to come from innocent minds ignorant of the modes and practices of life in a capital city, and in making preparations for a journey which in imagination appeared as full of difficulty as an expedition of discovery into the interior of Africa. Fanny conceiving that the town men whom Barbara was about to encounter were like so many famished monsters lying in wait for her, never ceased urging the necessity of taking every precaution against their wiles. Old Betty only thought of highwaymen and footpads, and conceived it impossible that her mistress could ever get safe to her journey's end without being robbed of her trunk, and of everything it contained. Abel himself did not exactly know what was likely to happen to them on the road, and was fully determined to keep his own council upon the business which was taking him to London, lest, should he divulge it, the nature of his distress might have some effect upon the price of stocks. Aunt Bab's volubility had almost forsaken her, owing to the many cares which revolved in her mind, in this great undertaking which she was about to achieve.

At length the morning arrived when they were to leave their long-cherished home. The coach which was to take them up passed by early in the morning on the high-road that skirted the village, and thither the whole family went in order to witness the phenomenon of Aunt Bab getting into a stage-coach. Little was said—their hearts were too full to speak; they walked on almost mechanically, each wrapped up in melancholy thoughts. Barbara alone seemed full of immediate care, for having abandoned the responsibilities of housekeeper; she was still so full of her old avocation, that she did not cease giving directions of what was to be done during her absence. When at length she and Abel, with their trunks and bundles, were deposited in the teeming vehicle, she would have paused on the very step with more last words touching a pair of woollen stock-

ings for an old woman, had not the impatient coachman urged her in; and before she could finish her speech, she was snatched from before the uplifted faces of Fanny, Mary, old Betty and honest Brown, with the swiftness of the wind—her last words dying in the air as she rolled away.

Being duly seated, they found only one other passenger in the inside. He was a sort of person new in his appearance to the eyes of both our travellers—a commercial coxcomb, aspiring to look like a groom and to speak like a pickpocket, overgrown with hair, wearing a coat dotted over with pocket-flaps, and squaring his elbows whilst he turned in his feet. He was very forward withal; and no sooner had he made a survey of the persons of his fellow-travellers, than he addressed them in a familiar, off-hand manner. The road led in sight of Belvedere Hall; and with scarcely a single preliminary observation, he at once commenced his observations on all that came before him.

"Oh, that's Belvedere Hall, I believe they call it," said he, addressing himself to Abel; "it belongs to a sharpish old chap, one Goold Woodby, who has coined more gold by his wits than ever the slaves in Mexico have done by hard labour."

"He has the reputation of being a rich man," said Abel.

"Did the gentleman say anything about Mexico?" said Aunt Bab.

"Yes, ma'am, I did," said the stranger; "and I say, too, that old Woodby there, in that house we have just passed, has jockeyed more people in those outlandish funds than can be counted, and has in consequence been promoted from the Stock Exchange to this flash house."

"But the Mexican funds have always been thought very secure?" said Bab, notwithstanding the jog which she received on her knee from Abel.

"None but a *spoon* would ever think so," said the stranger.

Bab's curiosity once excited, she could not stop. "And pray, sir, how can a spoon think! I never heard of such things before."

"Oh, ma'am," said the other, "if you don't know what a spoon means, why then take a *flat*."

"And pray, sir, what may a flat be? I am afraid I am ignorant."

"Why, ma'am, whatever you like: a *gawk*, a *nun*, a *ninny*—any one of these names will do as well."

Bab looked at Abel for an explanation, and still appeared confused; when the stranger, making a vulgar contortion of his mouth at her ignorance, at length exclaimed, "Why a fool, ma'am: you'll understand that maybe?"

"Indeed!" said Bab, making a significant exclamation, which she would have followed up by more observations had she not been stopped by Abel's admonitory knee. The stranger having fallen upon a subject with the nature of which he was fully conversant, (for he was a professional traveller for a commercial house,) was happy to be listened to as he became communicative. He described the nature of the foreign loans then so much the rage throughout the country, the juggles to which they gave rise, the rapid fortunes made by the wary and the ruin entailed upon the ignorant; he exposed in vulgar, though significant forms of speech, the tricks, the lies, the impositions which were practised by the designing upon the weak, and so proved the truth of the saying, that 'a fool and his money are soon parted,' that poor Abel and his unhappy sister positively cowered under the conviction of their folly. They sat silent, deeply ruminating upon their situation; and so absorbed were they in their own thoughts, that they scarcely heeded the stranger, who never ceased exhibiting his knowledge of the road and of the country as they were rapidly whirled along.

On any other occasion, had Abel and Barbara been free from care; and their minds open to observe all that was passing around them, their reflections would have been worth narrating, for there is nothing more amusing than to learn the effect of first impressions upon new minds; but theirs, upon reaching London, remained almost the same blank sheet of paper to which they might be compared upon their departure from Ivycote. Having passed the night in the coach, they felt very much jaded as they approached the term of their journey, and began to long for the moment of their release. The stranger left them at the very beginning of that interminable labyrinth of streets through which a traveller winds at whatever avenue he may enter the great metropolis; and upon his exit, when the coachman asked Abel where they would please to alight, Barbara would have said, "At the bankers' in Lombard-street," so anxious was she to attain the object of their journey, had not her brother checked her by saying they would go wherever the coach stopped, as all inns for the present were alike to them.

Thus they drove on through one never-ending thoroughfare into another, until they thought that fate had settled them for ever in a stage-coach. In vain they extended their necks through either window seeking their long-expected resting place—nothing like it was seen: crowds for ever succeeded crowds—shops for ever succeeded shops—houses for ever succeeded houses—the further they advanced, the deeper they seemed to dive into the chaos, until having passed a bridge such as their imagination could never conceive to exist, and seen more masts of ships than could be counted, they at length drew up at an obscure inn, ominous in name, and mean in appearance, called the Fleece, in the Borough. They entered through a narrow gateway, inscribed all over like a geographical register, and found themselves in a dark, dismal court-yard, without perceiving a single object within to cheer or enliven them. The heavy atmosphere was rendered doubly gloomy by rain, and everything wore a prison-like appearance. Abel and his sister, jaded, depressed in spirits, bewildered by noise and novelty at length slowly descended from their confinement. They were handed out by a waiter, who received his orders from the mistress of the inn, a species of Patagonian Medusa—with this difference, that instead of snakes writhing about her head, there protruded a variety of stiffened ribands, which darted from her coarse and flushed face like rank weeds springing from a foul soil, and she for the present became the dispenser of the destinies of our travellers. She first inspected them from head to foot, cast her eye over the quantity of luggage by which they were accompanied, and having given a contemptuous glance at the texture of Aunt Bab's gown, and the fashion of her bonnet, she allowed them to take possession of a small front parlour looking into the noisy, disquiet street. Here they inspected everything with a sort of dogged curiosity, first the miserable prints, then the inscriptions on the panels, and looking-glass, then the obsolete furniture, until, like mice in a trap, they began to peep from behind the green perpendicular blinds, and observe what was doing without. Their attention was soon diverted by perceiving the lively drama of Punch being performed in a little perambulating theatre directly before their window, which, by dint of blows inflicted, and exclamations of passion, and the gravity of an accompanying cat, managed to extract the first smile that had broken over the features of the unhappy pair since they had left their home. From this they were drawn away by

the appearance of breakfast, a meal which they much required to recruit their exhausted spirits, and this having been duly demolished, Abel insisted upon his sister going to her bed-room and taking a few hours' sleep before they sallied forth to seek the abode of the bankers, the one object of their thoughts and wishes.

Barbara struggled hard to persuade Abel to do the same; but he was so alive to the necessity of acquiring some information concerning the relative position of places, in order that he might not be entirely lost in the excursions they were about to make, that he refused her entreaties, although in matters of health he was usually tractable to her wishes.

He then rang the bell for the waiter, a stolid-looking youth, with hair growing almost out of his eyes; and with a tone of business-like inquiry (for he did not wish to be taken for a bumpkin) he said, "Pray, can you tell me whether Longhead the banker lives near here?"

"Longhead?" said the waiter, with his hand to his hair. "No, sir, I cant't say I do; but there's Mr. Broadhead lives over the way, if he will do for you."

Abel did not quite make out whether the youth intended to make game of him or not; but, nothing abashed, he continued, saying, "No, it's Mr. Longhead of Lombard-street, that I want."

"Ah, this is Broadhead of the Borough; so he won't do."

"But there *is* such a street as Lombard-street," said Abel as if he would himself be giving information. "You know that, don't you?"

"I believe there is too," said the waiter; "and I wish I had the picking of it."

At length Abel was fairly obliged to ask his way to Lombard-street; which obliged him to make the discovery that he was one totally new to London, and thus at once opened the eyes of the waiter as to the sort of personage he had to deal with.

"Maybe you are a stranger here," said the waiter. "If so, I say mind your eye, for London is but a queer place for the like of you. If you be going to Lombard-street, let me recommend you to take care of your pockets when you are coming out of it."

Abel took the hint, and passed his time until his sister should be ready in ruminating over his views. He was ever slow to think evil; yet still the conversation which he had held with the stranger in the coach concerning Woodby had produced an impression which taught him how ne-

cessary prudence was in trusting even one's best friend in pecuniary matters. The caution given to him by the waiter also checked those feelings of universal philanthropy which he had ever cherished, and he began to suspect that the love of one's neighbour, particularly in a capital, was a duty which required restriction. He was confirmed in this as he took his first walk along the street in order to try how he could pick his way, upon hearing some one behind him exclaim, "Sir, you'll lose your handkerchief!"

"Abel immediately felt in his pocket for that commodity; but not finding it there, exclaimed, "But it's gone!"

The only consolation he received was the sound of a hoot and a laugh from some one who had rapidly disappeared round a sharp corner.

CHAPTER XXIII.

An insight into one of those City commodities called 'a bubble.'

Barbara, refreshed by sleep, sallied out about two o'clock with Abel from the Fleece Inn, to seek out Messrs. Longhead the bankers in Lombard-street. They took the proper direction; but on passing London Bridge, their eyes became so fascinated and their attention so riveted by the new and various objects which presented themselves, that they had almost forgotten the object of their search. After having attracted much attention from the passers-by owing to their primitive appearance, and after much inquiry, they at length succeeded in reaching a dark, unwashed, begrimed-looking mansion in Lombard-street, into which they entered through a greasy door and found themselves in front of a battalion of busy men, not one of whom took the least heed of them, but who continued counting out and paying money writing and making calculations, as if they were not present. Abel stepped up to one whose face wore a civil expression, and having inquired for Mr. Longhead, he was desired to proceed into an inner and still darker room, where several men were seen also busy in the various labours of the pen. As soon as our travellers appeared, a well-bred gentleman, the acting partner, stepped forward,

and having offered them seats, seemed by his inquisitive look to inquire the object of their visit. Barbara felt relief by this act of civility, and Abel seemed to revive from the weight of care which oppressed him. They squared themselves in their respective chairs as if announcing their intention of setting in for a long consultation, although the gentleman by certain indications of impatience and hasty mode of speech wished to indicate how valuable time was to him.

"Our name is Allnutt," said Abel and Barbara both in the same breath.

"Very happy to see you, Mr. Arnold," said the banker.

"I beg your pardon," said Abel with great modesty; "my name is Allnutt."

"The Allnutts of Ivycote," added Aunt Bab.

"Extremely happy to see you," said the banker, casting his eye towards a book in which he had been writing. "Can I be of any service to you?"

"We come," said Abel, "in consequence of a letter I received;" at the same time drawing from his pocket the well-known document, and handing it to the banker, he added, "We wish to be informed what is to be done."

"Oh!" said the banker, opening and glancing on the letter; "I see. Yes, just so: there has been a great fall in Mexican securities—the panic still continues, and I do not believe that you would get anybody even to look at your stock although you might be willing to give it away for nothing."

"Give it away for nothing!" exclaimed Bab *sotto voce.*

"This is truly unfortunate," said Abel, looking very serious, "for it involves our whole fortune. Pray, sir, how has this come to pass?"

"You must be quite aware, sir," said the banker, "from your knowledge of the world, and of the English world in particular, that any novelty accompanied by hope of profit, encouraged and abetted by the Government of the country as this has been, is sure to turn the whole community, otherwise sober, into a nation of madmen. What is good in the abstract, becomes vicious in the hands of rogues and adventurers. So great was the illusion, that whilst the madness was raging, had a project of a loan to any place known or unknown in the world—even to the planet Mercury, been set on foot, I make no doubt that it would have been taken up and filled. With a country holding out the specious advantages which New Spain did, there was not a mo-

ment's hesitation; people were only angry that she did not require a larger loan—all they wanted was to lend. Those who proposed the loan to the Mexican Republic seemed, however, to have had sufficient foresight as to what might be its fate; and secured the exact payment of two years' interest: those two years have now expired, and the dividends are no longer paid."

"But Mr. Woodby did not tell you that," exclaimed Barbara to Abel,—"did he?"

"No," said Abel, "he did not."

"Mr. Woodby has been a successful speculator," said the banker with marked emphasis in his manner.

"Then what is likely to happen?" said Abel in a desponding tone. "Are these funds never to pay their dividends again?"

"I do not say that," said the other; "but at present I should positively assert that there is no chance of it. I will leave you to judge for yourself from the last accounts received from that country." Then addressing himself to one of the clerks in the office, he said, "Mr. Shovel, what is the latest news from Mexico? it was, I think, in this morning's paper."

Mr. Shovel brought in a paper, and said "Here it is."

"Pray, read," said the chief to his clerk, and turning himself towards his desk continued the occupation from which he had been drawn; whilst Mr. Shovel read as follows, Abel and Barbara meanwhile lending their whole attention to his words:—

"'By the accounts received by the Fox packet just arrived from Vera Cruz, it appears that the whole Mexican Republic from one end to the other is one scene of anarchy and civil war.——'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Barbara with dismay; "where can John be?"

Nobody heeding her question, Mr. Shovel read on. "'Its ill-organised government seems to be on the brink of dissolution; for Don Guzman de Sombrero Blanco is marching from Vera Cruz towards Jalapa to meet General Vincenze Puercogrueso, who is marching from Puente del Rey and a skirmish has already taken place, in which one brave patriot has been sacrificed.——'"

"Where was John?" exclaimed Barbara again.

—"'In the north, El Carnicero had taken possession of Durango; whilst Zacatecas was in full rebellion, headed by the Cura Rufiano. The whole country were of one mind in

hunting down Gachupinos, and they were flying for safety to the coast.' "

"I wonder where could John be?" said Bab, with the expression of her face increasing into agony.

—" 'In short, the whole of New Spain was about to be torn by civil war—the roads were overrun by banditti—the mines were deserted; there was no man to whom the public could look up, and property was no more safe than among a horde of savages.———' "

"What could have become of John?" said Barbara, still with increased interest.

"Ah!" said Mr. Shovel; addressing his chief, "here is the very decree of the Congress of Mexico relative to the stopping payment of the dividends."

"Read it," said his chief, looking up from his book.

"This is the secretary of state who writes.—'The supreme executive power has ordered me to proclaim as follows:—The supreme executive power, nominated by the sovereign congress general chosen by the United Mexican States, to all those who shall see and hear the present, be it known that the same sovereign congress orders what follows to be decreed:

" 'The sovereign congress general chosen by the United States of Mexico, ordains that the Mexican nation, so famed for its generosity, for the loyalty of its people, and for fidelity to its engagements, having taken it into consideration that the weakness of a state is misery to its inhabitants, and that to attempt to do that which is impossible is only to cast contempt instead of inducing respect, and in order to show its high sense of national strength when opposed to foreign demands, has decreed that the wants of the nation are paramount to all considerations; and thus asserting in the face of the whole world its high devotion to national good and to the public prosperity, decrees, and doth hereby decree, that the payments of dividends on all foreign loans are suspended until further notice. Given in our National Palace in Mexico, and signed,' " said Mr. Shovel, " 'by twenty signatures of persons to us unknown.' "

Abel, overwhelmed by the rhapsody of high-sounding words which had struck his ears, kept his seat, entirely overwhelmed by the hopeless aspect of his affairs; but Barbara, whose brain had gradually been thickened in its perceptions since the beginning of the news read by Mr. Shovel, had at length become so totally bewildered by the unintelligible bombast of the last part, that, yielding to her fears

that no one could exist in such a scene of confusion, she again exclaimed, "But where was John?"

The well-bred banker being at length struck by this often-repeated question, turned to the imploring Bab, saying, "I beg your pardon, but pray who is John?"

"Dear me!" said Barbara, "don't you know who John is? Major John Allnutt, our brother, who went out to take possession of the mines, and to civilise and introduce steam and all that into Mexico—he is John. How is it possible that all this should take place and he be there?"

"I now recollect," said the banker; "he went out director of the Anglo-United-Coffer and Jalap Company—Major John Allnutt—I recollect very well—a major of engineers—a very ingenious, scientific, enterprising officer." Barbara and Abel both cheered up at hearing these words. "He went out with excellent prospects—a large capital subscribed—shares at a premium—great quantities of steam-engines and Cornish miners also were sent out; but something, I think, happened to that company—what was it?' I recollect something about it." Then addressing himself with an exertion of voice to Mr. Shovel, who sat at a distance, he said; "Mr. Shovel, what happened to the Anglo-United-Coffer and Jalap Mining Company? I think so they called it."

Mr. Shovel, just raising his head a little from his desk, said, "There were no such mines to be found, and therefore the company was dissolved;" and then went on again with his occupation.

"The company was dissolved;" said the banker, "and therefore, I suppose, you will soon see your brother back in England."

This circumstance still more involved Abel and Barbara in perplexity, keeping up their spirits, on the one hand, in the hope of seeing their brother, but, on the other, destroying all the brilliant expectations they had formed of his prosperity and increasing wealth. At length Abel, totally unable to decide for himself what he ought to do, and seeing in the gentleman before him one who showed every inclination to be kind and considerate, in that exuberance of confidence which the wretched are so apt to bestow upon those who they think can protect them; said, "Sir, I beg your pardon for venturing to speak so boldly to you; but might I venture to ask what you would do if you were circumstanced as I am?"

The banker, who really was a kind-hearted man, answered after some hesitation, "In truth it is always difficult

to give advice in individual cases; but so far as the Mexican question concerns the shareholders, I would say that they ought to remain on the spot to second and assist by their endeavours the furthering such petitions as they might present to parliament to induce the king's government to interfere with the Mexicans in order to procure redress. Things may change; but experience tells us when the credit of a country has once been shaken, as in this instance, it takes long to restore confidence. Therefore, I would not have you be too sanguine in the hope of being speedily reinstated in your funds; but I would remain on the spot, and any assistance which we can afford you, I am sure we shall be very happy to put forward." Upon which making an impatient turn in his chair towards his desk, and Abel thereby taking the hint to depart, the parties separated with mutual expressions of civility and compliment.

The brother and sister upon leaving the banking-house walked on in silence for some time, both absorbed in thought at all they had heard, until Abel stopped short, and taking his sister's hand, said, "Barbara, we must send for Fanny and Mary immediately: we must stay here."

"Does that stand to reason, Abel?" said Aunt Bab.

"I am afraid it is the only thing we can do, circumstanced as we are," said he, whilst he endeavoured to suppress a deep sigh that rose from his breast.

Barbara in her secret mind partook of his feelings; but whether from the kind and civil manner with which they had been treated by the banker, or whether from the prospect of soon seeing John, it is true that at that moment she did not view the state of their affairs with the same desponding eye that Abel did. She hoped by her brother John's presence that things would all come right—for she argued, as he knew so much more of worldly matters than they did, so he would soon find some means of restoring their fortunes, and therefore she was infinitely more elated than Abel. She freely communicated her hopes to him—dwelt most emphatically upon the offers of assistance made by the banker, expressed great confidence in the never-failing resources of John's genius, and with all the self complacency of ignorance acting upon a sanguine temperament, had imagined her road to wealth and distinctions before they had paced half their steps back to their inn.

Abel, however, would not permit his sister to live in such a state of illusion; he solemnly warned her that she must prepare her mind to meet with all the privations and misery

that flow from poverty, and to face not only with boldness, but with meek resignation, the trials which it was evident were preparing for them: his mind, habitually imbued with the most serious and religious thoughts, seemed to expand into a wider field of gratitude towards the goodness of Providence for deeming him an object sufficiently worthy of notice that he should be thus tried in his principles, and he endeavoured to instil the same feelings in the mind of his sister, who, although an innocent-minded, well-disposed creature in the abstract, was apt to be carried away by the family failing—a too sanguine hope of enjoying by quick transitions the sweets of worldly prosperity.

Upon reaching their resting-place, Abel determined upon sending a note together with old Cruikshank's letter to Mark Woodcock, requesting him to call at the Fleece Inn, for he found that without his assistance it would be difficult to secure proper lodgings, and whilst he was so doing, Aunt Bab passed her time in writing a letter to her sister Fanny. The reader may perhaps like to see this production: it ran as follows:—

"My dear Fanny:—As soon as you receive this letter, you must begin to prepare to leave Ivycote. We have met a most civil, charming, amiable man in Mr. Longhead the banker of Lombard-street, who knew John, and called him an ingenious officer, and everything that is nice; but he said that he was coming home immediately, because he could not find the mines that he was sent about. This appears strange; but this excellent banker told us, that for the present our stock is not worth even giving away—there has been such a fall in Mexican securities, as he called them—and recommends us to fix in London in order to send petitions to the Houses of Parliament that they should attack the South Americans for us. Therefore, as we cannot do this at Ivycote, we must all be here; so begin to prepare: get the plate, linen, and clothes together—the groceries too—but never mind the cheeses and the bacon, as they must be sold with the furniture. Abel will write to Cruikshank about selling our things, with the pony, the pigs, and the cow; and then we will settle the day when you must set off, for we have not got our lodging yet in this immense city, which is something more wonderful than I ever thought of, or you either. We have got into the Fleece Inn, in the Borough, and have written to Cruikshank's nephew to come to help us taking a lodging. Do not think of setting off till you hear from us

again. You cannot think how well Abel is!—he sends you both a thousand loves. I am ever,

"Your affectionate sister,

"BARBARA ALLNUTT."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A cockney described. The advantages of a friend in need.

THE next morning found Abel and Barbara struggling with a London fog—a phenomenon it may well be called to those who see it for the first time. They groped their way from their bed-rooms to the parlour, where they sat scarcely able to distinguish each other, enveloped in the dense vapour like persons passing through the purifying smoke of a lazaretto. Oppressed as they were by this darkness over the visible world, as well as by the sense of their own miseries, they were not a little relieved as the fog cleared away to observe their old friend Punch again performing his antics before their window: it seemed as if he had divined their misfortunes and was endeavouring to relieve them. They were lending all their attention to the humour of his jokes when Mr. Mark Woodcock was announced, and in walked the nephew of old Cruikshank the village attorney. We must present him as a rare specimen of the true cockney, in mind as well as in person and manners; being endowed with every prejudice to the most frantic degree in favour of his own country, and feeling and expressing a corresponding contempt for all things that related to others. He held it almost as part of his religion, that one Englishman could beat three Frenchmen 'any day of the week,' as he would say; that roast beef and plum-pudding, as representatives of English fare, were dishes which put to the blush the genius of French cookery; that all other nations were pigs compared to the cleanliness of the English; that we rode better and sang better, and had better fruit and better vegetables—in short, that we were in every respect more civilised than other people, and that London was the largest and the finest capital in the universe. He spoke a language replete with expletives, and so intermixed with words and idioms to be found in no dictionary,

that in order to understand him it was necessary to be educated in the same school. He had a sharp snipe-like face, hair growing straight down his head—a freckled, fair complexion—light blue eyes, and possessed a cross-made person, which he attempted to adorn by the dress of fashion, but which he in fact succeeded to turn into a most exquisite piece of caricature. His uncle had educated him for the profession he had adopted, with the exception of superadding the knowledge of the French language—a precaution, as he said with prophetic foresight which would prepare him for whatever might turn up, and which, by the bye, persons in the middling ranks of life are apt to look upon as an introduction to gentility.

Mark, although vulgar in the extreme, who, if he were tried at the standard of refinement, would be called in round terms a blackguard, was nevertheless a good-hearted, well-disposed, and serviceable youth. On the occasion now before us, he did not hesitate for a moment in obeying his uncle's request to make himself as useful as possible to the persons recommended to his care. He hastened with great zeal from his lodging, near Lincoln's-inn, to the Fleece in the Borough; and when he got there, feelings of indignation rose in his breast when he perceived the obscure place in which his friends had settled themselves—for in the City, as elsewhere, there are various degrees of comparison touching the gentility of situation. He had no sooner made himself known, than he insisted upon Abel and Barbara accompanying him immediately in search of lodgings. Then making several curious interjectional exclamations, he said addressing himself to Bab, "But it's a burning shame that they have shoved you into this dog-hole!—why, it's just fit to keep cat's-meat in, and that's all!" He then asked them where they would like to live. Finsbury square he recommended as the *flash* place in the City, and Tower-hill he thought handsome; Broad-street was good, but he deprecated Cateaton and Threadneedle-streets, or Mincing and Philpot lanes; but asserted that there were neat things to be had in the City-road and about Peerless-pool.

Abel and Barbara, who knew as little of one place as they did of another, said they did not much care where they lived, provided they could occasionally see their bankers, and be ready to catch John whenever he appeared; and they were soon ready to accompany their guide. Barbara, however, having expressed an opinion, that since they were

likely to be some time in London, they ought to live in a place where their friends might come to see them, Mark, all at once striking his head as if a bright thought had enlightened him announced that he had a friend who lived in Silver-street, Golden-square, in the West end, which was the genteelest place of all; and he was certain that by applying to him he would get them lodgings in his neighbourhood, or perhaps in his very house.

Barbara was pleased with the sound of these names: to live near a Silver street and in a Golden-square appeared to her a circumstance so ominous of good, that she almost jumped at the idea, and she urged Mark to conduct them thither as soon as possible. They fought their way through the crowded streets, stopping open-mouthed to look at the shops, then turning back to expostulate for being rudely pushed about, until they reached the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard, when Barbara, arresting Abel's progress, came to a stand and pulled him on one side to keep him from the press, which was more than usually overpowering.

"What are we standing here for?" said Mark, turning back to seek his companions.

"We'll only wait a bit," said Barbara, "till the people have come out of that large church."

Mark was amazingly tickled by this piece of information; but, instead of breaking out into a horse-laugh, he contented himself out of regard to good manners, merely to exclaim between his teeth—"The old girl *is* a rum one, however!" and invited them to follow him without more delay.

At length they reached the house of Mark's friend, who took them at once to a house in Golden-Square, a respectable-looking tenement, with three windows in front and a brass-knocker on the door, and here they hired a suite of apartments as their future home.

Whoever has seen the approaches to Silver-street—dismal from the surrounding objects, unclean from a neighbourhood of miserable dwellings, and abounding in bad scents —and brings to his imagination the fresh, cleanly, fragrant, and cheerful Ivycote; will perhaps have some notion of the virtue and self-denial exercised by Abel and Barbara in relinquishing the latter for the former abode. But Abel had fully made up his mind to put up with every privation and to relinquish all comforts until he could retrieve their fortune; and, moreover, in his own person to do his utmost to gain a livelihood for himself, his sisters and niece. Bar-

bara, taking Mark's word that Golden-square was the head quarters of gentility, easily acquiesced in the eligibility of her lodgings; and having made their arrangements for taking immediate possession, they retraced their steps whence they came; in order to return accompanied by their goods and chattels.

Having reached the Fleece, they ordered a hackney-coach, and then called for their bill. The waiter brought in that inevitable document with a self-sufficient smirk, and delivered it with a flourish into Abel's hand. The sum total amounted to a great deal more than he had expected. Casting his eye over the items, he discovered, the first day, "To Punch, 1*s*." and the second the same charge. "Barbara," said he to his sister, "did you take punch? I am sure I did not!"

"Punch!" exclaimed Bab; "what punch? I have drunk nothing but water since I have been here!"

"They have charged punch twice!" said Abel; "here must be some mistake." Upon which he rang the bell for the waiter. "We have had no punch!" said Abel in a mild tone of voice; "why is it charged?"

"I believe you have, sir," said the waiter; "but I'll inquire." He went out and returned an instant after and said, "Yes, sir, you've had Punch twice—once yesterday morning, and once this."

"This can never be!" said Abel. "Pray tell me, where had we it?"

"Why, you had it at the window there," said the waiter. "I saw you."

"At the window!" exclaimed Bab and Abel both at the same time. "This is a gross imposition—we cannot allow this!—how can you prove it?" said Abel.

"The man outside saw you, as well as me," said the waiter. "Why, you wouldn't enjoy Punch without paying for it, would you?"

"What do you mean by punch?—you surely don't mean the puppet-show in the street?" said Abel.

"Yes, sir, that's the Punch I mean," said the waiter with the greatest effrontery.

"Blow me!" exclaimed Mark, if I ever heard the like of this!—this is doing business with a vengeance! She is a good one at a pun, however—I will say that for her!"

"Call in your mistress," said Abel to the waiter; "we must settle the matter with her."

She soon appeared, and flung into the room with such an

air of defiance, and with so red a face, that it was evident she was armed at all points for war. She stood with one hand on the door, and with the other on her hip, and begged to know if anything was wrong. Abel soon told his griefs in mild expostulation; asserted that what was done for the amusement of all in the street could not be brought as a specific charge to him in the house, and finished by announcing his determination not to pay such a bill. This declaration was answered by a burst of invective and abuse, expressed in language so totally new to the ears of Abel and Barbara, that they shrank from her presence like pigeons before the hawk. She had recourse to the same line of argument which low people invariably adopt—that is, in the first place, of giving a definition of the word 'gentleman,' and then starting from that point to give large and varied views upon things in general.

"You call yourself a gentleman, I dare say now," said she to Abel, her face and action bespeaking anger and brandy—"there's that" (snapping her fingers at the same time) "for such gentlemen!—A pretty gentleman indeed, as won't pay for what he's had! You've had Punch, and therefore you must pay for Punch—that's flat. I should like to see you—ay, and a great deal better than the like of you, try to leave my house without paying that bill—ay, and every doit of it too!—you'd find that we are not such nincompoops as you take us for! And I, a lone widow too, to be insulted by such as you!"

She would have said much more, had not she been stopped by Mark, who, like one hearing a tune which is familiar to him, immediately falls to singing it himself, was so roused by the sounds of a language which formed part of his vocabulary, that at length, unable to contain himself, he poured forth all the energies of his eloquence in such a manner that it startled the landlady, and tended in a great measure to check her violence.

He soon gave her to understand that he was a lawyer; a circumstance which blanched her cheek, but fired her eye—for the effect which such a person produces upon one of the lower class is very much the same as spitting upon hot iron, causing it to hiss and to cool at one and the same time. She continued her violence, but it was violence on the defensive, until at length fairly beaten by the sounds of certain talismanic words which lawyers are apt to pronounce, she retreated under a volley of the most intense abuse. The charges of the bill were properly abated; and Abel and Bar-

bara, conducted by their successful champion, having mounted the hackney-coach, left the Fleece Inn under the full conviction that that emblem had been adopted by some conscientious scoundrel of an innkeeper, who had determined to tell no lie, not even by sign.

It need not be suggested that the landlady, having concluded from Abel and Barbara's rustic appearance, and being confirmed in her judgment by what she heard from the waiter, that they were totally new to London and ignorant of its ways, had ingeniously contrived the trick of Punch to increase her charges. Let it be said that this circumstance served as a warning to the new-comers to be on their guard in all matters portentous of a bill; and as they took possession of their new lodgings, they took care to be duly informed upon every point which involved to them so weighty a consideration. Mark was of the greatest use in making their arrangements for housekeeping: he went and came, fetched and carried, with the most zealous attention; nor did he quit them until he had seen them fairly installed and surrounded by the various necessaries of life. He then left them after receiving a pressing invitation to return the next day; whilst they lost no time in writing letters to Ivycote, to give the last instructions to Fanny and Mary for the pursuit of their journey, accompanied by the address of their present abode.

Abel wrote to Cruikshank, giving him instructions to proceed immediately with the sale of the furniture, provisions, live and dead stock, at Ivycote, and to dispose of the lease of the house upon the best terms, reserving only such things as his sister might want. He calculated that with the money so produced he would be in possession of a sufficient sum to enable them to live on in London until some turn should take place in their affairs; whilst at the same time he determined to discover and to pursue the best mode of increasing their means either by the ingenuity of their brains, or the industry of their hands. He was deeply affected as he wrote this letter; for, during its composition, he could not omit revolving in his mind the possibility of their being reduced to the greatest straits. Unknown in a large capital, and ignorant of its ways, usages, and resources, he felt how great were the chances of their being thrown into the lowest abyss of poverty, and becoming beggars and wanderers in the streets. At the same time, hope would spring up and dart a ray of consolation athwart the dark fears of his breast; for he would cling to the cer-

tainty of being encompassed in his path by the power of a protecting Providence, and would ever and anon call up those words, the constant refuge of the wretched, in which the holy poet asserts that from youth to old age 'he had never seen the righteous man forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.' He attempted all in his power to conceal his feelings from his sister, who, excited as she had been by novelty, and by the many cares incidental to their new situation, had almost forgotten their miseries in their hurry; but when she came to a recollection of their true state, and when, pen in hand, she was about putting the finishing stroke to their former happiness by writing to her sister and niece to abandon all and join them, she became quite overwhelmed by her grief, and ere she had written five lines, she burst out into a violent paroxysm of tears. The brother and sister had sat in silence each over their letter; but when this burst of woe came to Abel's ears, so corresponding to his own, he could contain himself no longer, and he also wept aloud.

CHAPTER XXV.

Simplicity and silliness combined are the best ingredients for making a fool.

Who, that has ever lived in the small community of a country village and its neighbourhood, but must feel how great a sensation would be produced by such an incident as the breaking up of an establishment like the one at Ivycote, and the dispersion of its inhabitants. Ever since the memorable day of the abrupt departure of Aunt Bab and Uncle Abel, the subject matter of gossip and conversation among the high and low, rich and poor, was their motive for such a hasty step. The most simple occurrence in a city is a subject of marvel to a man in the woods; a dozen respectable people may be ruined in one street without its being known in the next: whereas, if an old woman loses her hereditary pair of bellows in the village, it raises a hue and cry all over the hundred. The plain fact of Mexico having refused to pay her dividends, when transported into

the country, was distorted into every absurdity or exaggeration which ignorance could devise.

As soon as Fanny had received her sister's letter, she found herself supplied with so excellent a pretext for leaving their old abode, and the breaking up of their household, that she did not fail to make use of it to whoever chose to hear her. Wherever she went, her first words were, "I am going to London in a few days to petition parliament;" and thus along the road, at the alehouse-door—at the chandler's shop—at the blacksmith's anvil, and at the plough-tail, nothing was spoken of but that Miss Fanny was going to London to petition parliament. The object of the petition seemed to be entirely absorbed in the high-sounding fact. Every one had heard of the losses sustained by the family; but as no one could make out the complicated reasons involving the history of foreign loans, dividends, and national securities, no one ventured to explain them; therefore they remained satisfied with the solitary explanation above mentioned.

The only approach to the truth was made by Betsy Cruikshank, who, having heard her father the attorney discourse upon the subject, thought that she might speak her mind, and therefore the next time she saw her opposite neighbour, Mrs. Humphries the schoolmistress, she was heard to say across the road, "Have you heard the news? Miss Fanny is going to London to petition parliament."

"What for?" said Mrs. Humphries.

"Because they say the Mexicans have seized all Mr. Abel's stock."

"What stock?" said Mrs. Humphries.

This question puzzled Betsy, who, pausing a moment, said "His live stock, to be sure."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Humphries, apparently quite satisfied, and then very soon after left the care of her school to spread about the report; and thus Betsy's news, by the end of the day, having run through as many variations as a simple tune does in modern composition, at length stopped at this fact—that the village stocks had been run away with, and that Miss Fanny was going to London to petition parliament for a new set.

Ever since the absence of Abel and Barbara, Edward Manby had not failed to call constantly at Ivycote. He came and went daily, more and more enamoured with the charms and virtues of Mary; but Fanny always cherished a secret something that those old long-acknowledged beauties

of hers would work their way into men's hearts in spite of every obstacle, and that Edward was gradually becoming their victim. He was, it is true, very attentive to her; but whilst his tongue in accents kind and gentle addressed the aunt, his eyes and heart were all with the niece. Mary, however much she might be charmed with Edward, and however much she might be pleased with his conversation, still, in the present circumstances of her family, she felt how imperative it was to check those feelings which, if indulged, might still add to their miseries; and she determined to watch the emotions of her heart with the most scrupulous care, lest in giving way to her partiality she might hold out false encouragement to the object of it. She was, moreover, oppressed with anxiety concerning her father, from whom it was long since she had received any intelligence.

Edward was seated in the parlour with Aunt Fanny and Mary when Barbara's second letter arrived. As soon as Fanny had read it, and fully understood the pressing nature of its contents, although well prepared by the first letter, she was seized with one of those hydra-headed fits of fussiness which are so apt to disorder a weak mind, and in this instance so weak that it had not capacity to take in more than one thing at a time. London, a stage-coach, her trunk, petition to parliament, her bandbox, a handsome banker, Golden-square, her brother John, groceries and packing—all these things in rapid confusion arose in her mind, and produced such a bewilderment of ideas, that although she sat fixed in her chair, yet she seemed pulled about in fifty different ways at once. She willingly would have got up and done all that was necessary at one and the same time; but, after a long struggle, she was so fairly overcome by the nervous excitement which this call for immediate action produced, that all she could do was to burst into tears, and for a time she freely gave way to violent weeping.

Mary, too, was distressed: she would fain have given consolation to her aunt, but it was out of her power to help her, so agitated was she by the thousand cares which had all at once burst upon her mind. Edward, perceiving that women in so forlorn a situation require the prop of man's assistance to carry them through their difficulties, determined instantly to make an offer of his services to escort them to London, and not to leave them until he had deposited them in the hands of their relations. This he did in as delicate a manner as possible (for he feared to appear

too forward), but at the same time with such a warmth of sincerity, that Aunt Fanny and Mary both received immediate consolation from his proposal.

There was that in the frank character of Edward which inspired unlimited confidence; and ere a quarter of an hour had elapsed he formed a plan of proceedings for them which rendered the whole business of the journey easy and agreeable. He moreover made himself eminently useful in furthering Abel's instructions to old Cruikshank with regard to the disposal of the property; and so indefatigable was he in his exertions, that on the third day after the receipt of Abel and Barbara's letters they were ready to take their departure. But before they did this, Fanny thought it right to take leave of their friends at Belvedere Hall, and accordingly drove there for the last time in the expiring splendour of their pony-chaise, with honest Brown for her coachman. Mary accompanied her; and although a close observer might have observed a deep shade of melancholy on her countenance, still that did not diminish the brilliancy of her beauty or the charm of her natural and artless manners.

Those afflicted with extreme, and therefore inconvenient sensibility, would have remarked a tone of protection in the ladies of the family of Belvedere in their manner of reception, which marked how much the depression in Mexican securities acted upon their political horizon. Mrs. Woodby, in lieu of that large and well-expanded hand which she was wont to thrust forward in former greetings, was satisfied on this occasion to adopt the *monodactylon* form of recognition. The young ladies embraced without fervour; Miss Ellen scarcely went through the form towards Mary, for reasons easily to be guessed; whilst Anne allowed her affections for Aunt Fanny to be transferred to her bonnet, which part of her head-dress meeting that of the more aged spinter's resembled a shock of helmets rather than the recognition of friendship. As for lady Thomson, she scarcely took any notice of them as they entered the room; for in her inmost thoughts she asserted that it was a duty she owed to herself on no occasion to increase her acquaintance with those who were never likely to be of the least use to her. Tom Woodby, on the other hand, since the fall in their fortunes, had put himself forward as a great admirer of Mary, criticised her beauty and person with the disgusting tone of a libertine, and to all the vulgar raillery with which he was assailed by his sisters he only answered by a knowing shake of the head and a licentious leer.

When Aunt Fanny, in announcing their immediate departure, had entered into some particulars of that necessity which was now so well known to all the country, she excited the smiles and significant looks of her auditors, for she had been a theme of ridicule rather than an object of pity ever since the day of the ball and the family misfortune. She still endeavoured to make the whole occurrence pass off with high-minded indifference; and talked of mines, and securities, and Mexico, and her brother John, with that sort of air which might have made those believe, who did not know the true state of the case, that it only required a petition to parliament to set the whole matter to rights. She also made known, with perhaps the same sort of air that a lady of fashion announces to her friends her having taken a house in Grosvenor-Square, that her brother and sister had fixed upon *the* Golden-Square (as she called it) as their future abode; never in the least suspecting that a place possessing so dazzling a name was scarcely ever known in the polite circles.

"Golden-Square!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodby; "is that anywhere near the Minories?"

"I never heard of the name before," said Anne; "it can't be one of the fashionable squares."

"Oh, indeed it is very fashionable," said Fanny: "it is close to Silver-street!" giving her word an emphasis which denoted great topographical knowledge.

"I never heard of Silver-street either," said Anne; "I wonder at which end of the town it is?"

"It is at neither end," said Fanny, quite bristling up; "it is in the middle, where it ought to be."

"Then I suppose it may be near one of the inns of court," said Anne.

"It is near no inn whatever," said Fanny still more irate; "it has nothing to do with an inn or the court of an inn. It is where all genteel people live, so Bab tells me; and so Mark Woodcock told her, and he knows, for he has lived in London all his life."

Poor Fanny only got herself well laughed at for her assertions, in the making of which she was mainly impelled by the desire of upholding the family dignities and advocating the measures taken by her brother and sister. During this discussion, the arrogant Tom had been endeavouring to engage Mary's attention, inflating his insignificant person into as much importance as it was capable of assuming, and amusing her as he thought by malicious re-

marks upon persons of their acquaintance, in which sly calumnious hints at Edward Manby's poverty, parentage, and dependent situation were not omitted, and purposely brought forward in order to produce comparison with his own great expectations and personal merits.

Mary and Fanny rose at the same time to take their leave, not very well pleased with the result of their visit; although Mrs. Woodby and her daughters said that they hoped soon to meet in London, for that it was Mr. Woodby's intention to spend the next season there, as Ellen was to be brought out; and she added, "Since their last visit to Brighton, it became quite a matter of duty for them all to go to court, noticed as they had been by the king and queen."

Mr. Woodby, who had become shy of the Allnutts since the catastrophe in the Mexican funds, had designedly absented himself during this visit, fearing that he might be called upon to make explanations; and when he heard that the country was likely to be clear of them for the future, and that their house and land were to be disposed of, he rejoiced, as it had been a favourite project of his to get possession of them, in order to complete the boundary of his estate.

Fanny and Mary having returned to Ivycote, nothing now further remained to be done than to make preparations for immediate departure. In the contemplation of their reduced circumstances, Abel had thought it right to discharge both old Betty and honest Brown; but when the moment of the ultimate migration arrived, old Betty announced that nothing would prevent her from accompanying Aunt Fanny and her niece; and that, if they could not afford to pay her wages, she would serve them for nothing, and wait like them with patience for better times.

This being agreed to, we will spare the reader the last parting from the beloved home of the Allnutts—in which he would have sympathised with the grief of Mary and the deep regrets of Aunt Fanny, who, wandering about the house and premises with aching hearts, bade adieu to every spot as if taking leave of old friends—and request him to exert his imagination in forming a succession of pictures in which the faded spinster with her niece by her side in the coach, with Edward Manby assiduous and attentive to them both, with faithful Betty in the remaining corner, are first driving with reckless speed along the turnpike-road—then catching hasty mouthfuls from tables spread at stated intervals—then becoming jaded and way-worn at the close of day—then

nodding with unrefreshing slumbers during the night—until at length the day having dawned, they are aroused from sleep by a friendly hand pointing to a dark, yellow, sluggish-looking mass of heavy vapour, and exclaiming: "There —there is London!"

At length the coach stopped in London itself; and whilst Fanny and Mary were opening their eyes at the strange things which surrounded them, and at the variety of new faces which were collected, on a sudden they were greeted by the sound of a well-known voice, and then, to their extreme joy, they saw Uncle Abel. Mary would have jumped into his arms, and almost screamed with delight; Fanny collected herself into as becoming an attitude as she could before so many strangers; while Edward Manby was unceasing in his exertions to collect their luggage, to satisfy the numerous demands for shillings and sixpences, and at length to deposit them in the hackney-coach which was to convey them to Golden-square.

We will not, for the present, advert to the thousand and one things which the brother, sisters, and niece, had to say to each other upon their first meeting; although in truth, admirers as we are of genuine feeling and unsophisticated nature in all its various shades and departments, we would willingly have collected their remarks, exclamations, sayings, and doings, for the gratification of those who might sympathise with us in our admiration, but we wish to put the reader right upon the state of feeling which existed between Mary and Edward.

From the commencement of their acquaintance to the present moment, their admiration had been progressive and reciprocal; and it had stopped at the point where lovers profess that they feel like brother and sister. Edward, however, had in truth proceeded beyond that point in his love, and so intense was his admiration, and genuine his sincerity, that we believe he would willingly have subjected himself to any test to prove it; but the present forlorn situation of the family, and the position of Mary herself, who, without the sanction of her father, he knew would not bind herself to any one, combined to keep his feelings in check, and he restricted himself to demonstrations of the greatest devotion to her and to those who surrounded her. Mary, as we said before, watched over her feelings with circumspection; but her prudence served only to smother a flame which might break out upon the first great excitement.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Misfortune sharpens the wits. Need makes the old wife to trot.

Barbara and Abel, ever since their settlement in Golden-square, held daily conferences upon what they could do in order to procure themselves the means of gaining an independent livelihood. When they came to cast up the result of their different capabilities, they ascertained that Barbara had excellent notions of cookery and could make perfect pickles and preserves: that Fanny had a great knack at fancy-work, and showed much talent for the inventions of pincushions; that Mary might, with some teaching, become a governess; and that Abel could undertake to teach the German flute.

Mark Woodcock had been called in to give his opinion; but his powers of invention were small, and did not reach beyond the mode of making attorneys and attorneys' clerks. However, when he exerted his recollection, it occurred to him that, by great exertion among his friends, he might possibly secure to Abel the situation of secretary to the club of Jolly Fellows, held weekly in a tavern in Covent Garden, where he would have an opportunity of forming a wide acquaintance which might assist him in his views. Abel was fearful that his abstemious habits would render him ineligible for the situation; but still, rather than allow his sisters to starve, he was ready to undertake the necessary acts of conviviality: the scheme, however, was allowed to lie over for further consideration.

When Edward came, he also was asked to assist them with his suggestions; for although he did not habitually live much in London, yet he was acquainted with its ways and means, and had acquired some knowledge of the literary market, in which he had occasionally been himself a speculator. Happy would he have been to share his small pittance with his friends, for small indeed it was; but his prospects also consisted mainly in his own ingenuity and industry; and although for the present he was poor, yet still he hoped in time to hit upon some mode of gaining an independent livelihood. Having, like many young authors, made his first essays in the periodical publications of the day, he stated it as his opinion, that a very tolerable livelihood might

be gained in literature, provided talent and industry went hand in hand; and, moreover, furnished the direction of a bookseller living not far from Golden-square, who was ever ready to offer fair remuneration for the lighter kinds of composition,—poetry, tales, pointed anecdotes, or descriptive sketches. "At least," added Edward, "I found him so disposed three years ago!"

This hint was sufficient to set the brains of the sisters, the brother, and the niece, immediately at work. They thought long and oft, but nothing came. The process of sitting down to make a fortune without any more materials than a head, pen and ink, and a piece of paper, seemed to them so very simple that they all decided it was much more agreeable to do so than to cross the seas to dig for gold in Mexico. What so charming, thought they, as getting, in return for a few sheets of paper, pounds of gold! As for invention, knowledge, powers of description, judgment, and the various qualities of the mind requisite to the production of a successful work, they asserted that no one could know what share of them he possessed until he tried. Abel, for aught they knew, might prove a second Milton,—Barbara might shine forth as an Austin,—and Fanny rival Miss Edgworth. It was amusing to remark the silence evident in the household since this suggestion of Edward Manby; every individual that composed it was deep in cogitation; each in their turn had "sunk from thought to thought a vast profound," until their heads perfectly seemed to ache with cogitation.

Several days elapsed, and not a single idea had crossed the four collected heads of the family, when Aunt Bab one morning came out all radiant with joy from her bed-room asserting she had been visited by a happy inspiration during the night,—that by chance she had dreamt of roasted hare, and, as she awoke, she asked herself why she should not put into verse the whole of Mrs. Rundell's book upon cookery? She thought that such a work must be a desideratum in the world; for that it stood to reason it would be much easier for a cook to carry in mind the precepts which it contained in verse, than to retain them in prose. She said that she had been so much impelled by this thought that she could not refrain that very morning from trying her skill, and that she had selected Mrs. Rundell's recipe for making hare-soup (out of compliment to her dream) as her first essay. She had, however, found the truth of the saying, 'that dreams were to be interpreted by contraries,' for that

in exerting her wits to the utmost, she could not get beyond the first two lines, do all she could. She had succeeded thus far:

> When hares are old, and fit for nothing else,
> Then is your time to make them into soup.

But where the rhymes for *else* and *soup* were to be found she for one could not tell, therefore it stood to reason that she must try something else. She had been more successful in her second essay, it was on the subject of beef; the rhymes were easy and almost spoke for themselves. She thought she had succeeded, and that she might give it as a specimen of the whole work. Upon which she produced a fragment of paper, from which she read as follows:

TO STEW A RUMP OF BEEF.

> Wash it well and season it hot,
> Bind it, cram it in a pot;
> Fry three onions, put them to it,
> Carrots, turnips, cloves and suet;
> With broth or gravy cover it up,
> Put in your spoon and take a sup.
> Soft and gentle let it simmer,
> Then of port throw in a brimmer.
> With judgment let the ketchup flow,
> Of vinegar a glass bestow.
> Simmer again for half an hour;
> Serve at six, and then devour.

Various were the observations made, and all seemed to say that it was much better than anything they could have expected from the sort of subject, which, to say the least, was not very poetic. Aunt Bab, in describing the process of composition, asserted that the book and its materials would be very much improved by being in verse—"For," said she, "in this very receipt, I have increased the excellence of the dish to be dressed, by adding an ingredient which it did not possess before—namely, suet. I wanted a rhyme for 'to it,' and up came 'suet' as a matter of course; and therefore it stands to reason that I have added to its value."

Edward was mightily diverted by this essay, which he thought was quite original, and perhaps might hit the public taste, which he asserted was ever the first consideration in the mind of publishers. The most divine poem, the most learned disquisition, the profoundest research, the greatest

compass of invention, he said, were looked upon as so much refuse by the booksellers if they were not adapted to public taste.

"What then can be better adapted to the public taste," said Aunt Bab, not giving those words the intellectual meaning which Edward had intended to convey, "than a book of cookery? It stands to reason that, with so many dishes described before him, everybody will find one at least to his taste." She then announced her intention of going on with her work, and Edward promised that he would submit her labours to his friend the publisher as soon as she should have collected a few more specimens.

Not long after Barbara's exposure of her plan, Uncle Abel was observed to be more than usually oppressed with thought; and it was remarked that he occasionally had recourse to scraps of paper upon which he wrote by snatches, and seemed to be intensely interested during that operation,—in fact, he exhibited every symptom of composing a poem? When he was spoken to, he did not answer; he became absent in mind, and, little heeding the gross and dismal objects by which he was surrounded in the dark atmosphere of Golden-square, he appeared to breathe in an ideal world of his own creation. At length, one morning after breakfast, he announced that he had done his utmost to put together some lines which he conceived, with their approbation, he might submit to the publisher; and although he was quite diffident about their success, yet, having been impelled by what Edward Manby had said, and by the sense of their necessities, he had laboured hard to make himself a poet. "Read! read!" was exclaimed by all present.

"I wonder what he can have found to write about in this dull hole!" said Fanny.

"I wish I could write something too!" said Mary despondingly.

"Read!" said Bab, putting on a most critical look.

Abel drew forth a paper, and read as follows:

ON INNOCENT PLEASURES.

Away for e'er ye vain and vicious joys!
Ye haunts of vapid mirth and idle noise!
For me no more your revelry shall please,
Your banquets sicken, or your coxcombs tease.

"I see," said Bab, with a sigh, "you have been thinking of our doings at Ivycote!"

But come, thou sober harmony of soul,—
The passions' bridle, and the heart's control;
Come calm delights, pure as the heavenly ray,
Cheerful though serious, temperate though gay.
Oh! how I love each simple scene to trace,
And from rude Nature snatch each artless grace;
'Midst fields, and woods, and steepest wilds to rove,
Pause on each bank, and muse in every grove!
To watch the glimmerings of th' approaching day,
The solemn shades of dawn, the shooting ray,—
Nature all sparkling from the midnight rain,—
The long bright gleams that flash across the plain.
To meet the flocks freed from th' impatient pen,
In fleecy train winding across the glen,
Whilst lowing herds, slow moving from the shed,
Break the still air, and o'er the pastures spread.
Or, at the evening's close, from some tall brow,
To mark the sun's retreat from all below,
The thin blue vapour's harmonising dye,
Blending the distant landscape with the sky—
To hear the pipe enlivening the vale,
And peals of laughter swelling on the gale,
For new delights each rural sound provokes—
The ploughman chiding loud his sturdy yokes—
The busy mill and streams that dash along—
The shepherd's shout, the milkmaid's artless song—
The cock's response—the caw—the chattering jay—
The honest bark, and e'en the distant bray—

"Stop!" said Bab; that won't do Abel!"

These are thy joys, sweet Innocence; and these,
Where virtue fills the heart,—

"Stop!" again exclaimed Bab; "the bray will never do —how can you say that you have received pleasure from the bray of an ass? That alone will make the publisher reject your work."

"I think that any sound, be it what it may," said Abel, "which brings rural images before the mind, is pleasing; and therefore it appeared to me that I might class the bray with the other sounds which I have mentioned."

"Nothing can reconcile me to a donkey's bray," said Fanny.

"It was only this very morning," said Mary, with great deference of manner, "that I heard an ass braying in the square; and I could almost have cried, it put me so much in mind of Mrs. Humphrey's donkey at dear Ivycote, with which we were all so well acquainted.

"There!" said Abel; "Mary has explained my meaning

at once. It is not that the braying itself is an agreeable noise but it is the association of ideas thus produced, which is the cause of the pleasurable feeling, and indeed one may say of all poetic feeling."

"Well, said Barbara, "you'll see I'm right, for it stands to reason that I am. We will refer to Edward Manby when he comes, and you'll see that he will say I'm right. How any poetry can be extracted from the bray of an ass, is to me incomprehensible!"

They argued for some time on this subject until they had thrown themselves into a sufficient degree of party heat; and when Edward Manby appeared, one and all they rushed towards him each with a question on their tongue, of which the words "ass" and "braying" were heard distinctly above the rest. When he could sufficiently abate the violence of their zeal, and ascertain the object of dispute, like all moderators, he took the middle line, and said, "that for his part he must avow, that the braying of an ass in Golden-square appeared to him as much out of character as might be the singing of Braham (let us say) in a field, or a farm-yard; but that the one no more precluded the sweet recollections of rural life and scenery, than did the other the calling up the whole fascination of an opera-house.

With this all parties were satisfied, and harmony was restored, though not before Aunt Bab had insisted upon receiving Edward's opinion whether her own particular observations upon Abel's poem were well or ill founded. Edward read it over with much attention, and expressed himself quite satisfied with the propriety of the image which Abel had used, however low it might appear: he observed that the word 'neigh' might have been adopted instead of 'bray,' and would have answered the rhyme just as well; but that the image which that word produced was rather of too elevated a character for the others which preceded it, and would have destroyed the humble and homely cast of the picture. Barbara gulped down no slight feeling of mortification at this decision against her judgment; but she did not allow it to disturb her good feeling towards him who pronounced it. On the contrary, when he proclaimed himself ready to proceed to the publisher in order to propose the two productions, hers and Abel's, for insertion in one of his next publications, she could not sufficiently express her gratitude; for if there be one feeling more impelling than another, it is the desire which every one has, who has any pretensions to write, to see himself in print for the first time.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Writing for one's bread seldom answers unless one is bred to writing.

AUNT BARBARA having given the finish to some pathetic lines upon the best mode of scalding a sucking-pig, with a spirited address to those who are about to choose fish, presented them to Edward as he was about to conduct Abel to the publisher's, saying, "These specimens must do for the present, and will show what my intentions are."

Edward and Abel were about leaving the house, when Aunt Fanny came rushing after them flourishing a sheet of paper in her hand, and saying that she had just finished a tale which she hoped might be thought worthy of being added to the family productions: she avowed that it was a hasty sketch, and hoped it might be classed among the light literature of the day. Edward, with the greatest good-nature, took it from her, and said that they had better read it before they proceeded further, and as it appeared short it would not take up much of their time. Without making any formal sitting, they stood round him whilst he read as follows:

"THE STORY OF THE SWEET CURRANJEL,

AN EASTERN PRINCESS.

"IN a deep sequestered wood, totally secluded from the busy haunts of men, and quite impossible to be pierced by the sun's rays, lived the sweet Curranjel, in a most beautiful cottage entirely covered over with ivy entwined with honeysuckles, and darkened into the coolest freshness by the number of odoriferous plants which grew quite over her windows. She passed her whole existence in sitting on a mossy bank, tending a lovely little lamb, white as the driven snow, which she always kept beautifully washed with the best brown Windsor soap, and tied with a pink riband to her waist; whilst she held a crook in her hand and read a book with the other. She was always dressed in the cleanest white muslin pelisse imaginable, with pink ribands and bows in her sleeves and round her waist, and with a lovely Leghorn hat on her head, and white kid gloves. She was so extremely beautiful, that every-body who saw her, as they passed by, would turn round and stare at her, and

say to themselves, 'La! I wonder who is that?' Although she never stirred from the repose of her luxurious residence, yet she was the talk and admiration of all the neighbourhood; and people would come from a great distance just to steal a peep at her from behind the trees, and dodge round and round just to get one single glimpse of her astonishingly powerful coal-black eyes. One day, as the sweet Curranjel was partaking of a cold collation by the side of a murmuring stream, composed of some nice clouted cream, with some raspberry jam in it, and some very nice macaroon biscuits, to her great surprise all of a sudden her dear innocent little lamb made a jump, and breaking its pink riband from her waist, ran away. She was puzzled at first what to do with her clouted cream and macaroons; but at length, with great presence of mind, she laid them down upon the bank, and like a young mountain goat, fleeter than the winds, she took to her legs and ran after her innocent little lamb. She had not run many steps, when, just as she turned round a corner, she perceived straight before her a most accomplished young Eastern prince, extremely handsome, with auburn hair curling all over his head; teeth of astonishing whiteness, and with piercing eyes darting from behind an aquiline nose, and very red downy cheeks. He was dressed in the most beautiful manner in a Polish dress, with tassels hanging from his curiously embroidered cap, and held a flageolet in his hands, upon which he could play divinely. She stopped in the greatest confusion—he stopped in utter dismay. She looked away and down on the ground at the same time—he stole side-glances at her, but dared not speak. They would have remained so for a long time, perhaps to this very hour, had not the little innocent lamb come bleating and hopping by; when the sweet Curranjel, forgetting her awkward situation, made a dart forward to seize the pink riband—the youth also made a dart forward to seize the lamb—and these two darts having brought them close together, they stood close to each as if they had been fixed by one dart:—there they stood, the innocent lamb between them, the picture of virtuous love and Arcadian simplicity. Their respective breasts heaved—their respective tongues faltered—the lamb bleated, until overcome by the intensity of his feelings, the young stranger at length exclaimed with the most impassioned accents, 'I love thee!' which struck with such deep vibrations in the inmost heart of the sweet Curranjel, that she, no longer able to contain her emotions, answered in these simple but expressive words: 'Do you?'

and the lamb being an emblem of the purity of their affections, they were immediately married by a Roman Catholic priest who lived in an adjoining cell, and were very happy ever after."

Edward scarcely knew which way to look after reading this specimen of Fanny's idea of an Eastern tale. Fearful of hurting her feelings, he composed his features as well as he could into proper gravity, and assured her that he would offer it to the notice of the publisher, and without more ceremony, accompanied by Abel he led the way to his habitation. In his recollection it had been a mean-looking shop; but when he approached the spot, to his surprise he found a front so ornamented, glazed, and painted—so resplendent from without with the promise of every literary luxury within, that he scarcely ventured to enter. When he did so, instead of those overlaid counters and dusty shelves which he well recollected, he found a handsome apartment, carpeted, decked with mahogany counters, glittering with books in brilliant bindings, and exhibiting a magnificence which bespoke what in fact was very nearly the truth, that all the genius of the times was rather expended upon the surface of things than upon their intrinsic merits.

Edward, followed by Abel, was introduced into a small sanctum; still more beautifully fitted up than the main shop, where, seated at a handsome table covered with papers, books, and manuscripts, sat in great state, and in a handsome easy chair, the owner and director of the establishment.

When Edward first knew him, he was all smiles and welcome; his appearance at that time was without pretensions, and there was a musty complexion on whatever surrounded him, very different from his looks at the present moment; for now everything wore the appearance of gentility—he was dressed with the most scrupulous precision, and might have vied in appearance with the great of the land. Instead of wearing a soft and supplicating look, he now appeared to be on the defensive—he was buttoned up and mysterious—he had adopted the manners of one given to protection. When Edward was introduced, he scarcely rose from his seat, and then formally offered him and Abel chairs. Scarcely acknowledging that he had known Edward before, when the business of the visit was explained, he immediately put on a doubting face, and after considerable hesitation, turning over the papers which had been put into his hand, said

"These sort of things did very well some time ago; but we do nothing now but what is high—quite tip-top."

"Ah! I suppose that the world has been so accustomed to read the beauties of Byron," said Edward, "that it can bear nothing else. I am afraid, if that be the case, our productions can have but little chance."

"It is not that I mean," said the publisher: "pray, may I ask who is the author of these things?"

"This gentleman, Mr. Abel Allnutt, is one," said Edward, pointing to his companion, "and his sisters, the Miss Allnutts, are the others."

"They will not do," said the publisher; "we deal entirely now with the nobility and with persons whose names are known in the world. I never heard of Allnutt before—it has never been before the public in any shape."

"But why should not these productions stand upon their merit alone, and not upon the name of the author?" said Edward.

"Merit is all very well in its way," said the publisher; "but who waits now-a-days to find it out? The publications in which these sort of things appear, require no merit but that of names; and when my Lord This, or the Duchess That, condescends to write, it is taken for granted that there is merit. Why, sir, I make no donbt that if the chancellor of the exchequer would appear as the editor of a new edition of Cocker's Arithmetic, or if I could induce the lord chancellor to write a history of the great *seal* which is now exhibiting at Piddock's, and put his name to it—I am confident that I could make a great deal of money by such a speculation."

"Then, sir, am I to understand," said Edward, "that you publish nothing which has not got a great name attached to it?"

"We give money for nothing else," said the publisher: "we pay in proportion to the position of the author, and I fear that we can afford nothing in the present instance."

Upon which, regaining possession of their proffered productions, they took their leave, Abel from the beginning of the conference having given up all hope of obtaining success in the literary line, and determined to turn his thoughts to to other things.

Upon reaching home he found a letter from Cruikshank, which he and his sisters had been expecting with great anxiety, for its contents were likely to be of considerable consequence, inasmuch as it would inform them of the result

of the sale at Ivycote. The sum which thereby they were to realise would form their only visible means of subsistence for the present, and therefore the amount of it became a matter of intense interest. They conceived their calculation to be much within the mark when they fixed a moderate sum as the amount of their expectations; but what was their mortification, and we may add, their consternation, when they found that the money which Cruikshank had to remit to their bankers but very little exceeded half that sum!

Exaggerated expectations are always sure to produce exaggerated disappointments. Because the cow and the pigs had been sold to Mr. Woodby at half the price which Aunt Bab had expected, she immediately exclaimed that there must have been some foul play in favour of the rich man; and when they discovered by Cruikshank's accounts that the wash-tubs and laundry gear had been knocked down to the Silvertops literally for nothing, they were sure that the auctioneer must have played some trick, because they well recollected that the Thickentales always said how much they longed to have them. There was no end to the discussions, the endless remarks, and the gossip produced in Golden-square by the sale which had taken place at Ivycote. Old Betty raised lamentations that were heard all over the house, because the new coal-skuttle which she had bought only a month before they came away for twelve shillings, had been sold for three and sixpence; and Aunt Fanny would not allow herself to be consoled, because Mrs. Humphries, the school-mistress, had got the parlour looking-glass; for she said, "what business could she have with a looking-glass? and was it not setting a bad example to the girls, if they ever saw her inspecting her ugly face in it?"

Were not the subject too important to the well-being of our simple friends to be turned into a joke, we would willingly continue to amuse our readers with all the circumstances resulting from this event. Abel's courage almost fell to despondency when he looked into the state of their affairs and the difficulties of their situation. The rent alone of their lodging would swallow up a great portion of their means: although they lived as sparingly as possible, allowing themselves nothing but the merest necessaries, still those inexorable things called weekly bills came round with despotic exactitude, and lessened their store in spite of the most rigid economy. Abel always endeavoured to bring back his mind to that steady repose in the ways of Providence which he had ever cherished, whenever he found it

deviating into anxious apprehensions for the future; but with all his philosophy he could not help feeling downcast and oppressed. He did his utmost to appear cheerful before his sisters and niece, and talked with confidence of what might be done in a city so full of resources as London, but when left to himself, his true feelings would break out, and the only mode of relief he could devise was to walk about the streets, and so endeavour to dissipate his mind from the distracting contemplation of his necessities.

The defeat of their literary scheme had not made the deep impression which perhaps it otherwise would, owing to the matter of major importance contained in Cruikshank's letter; but that subject having been discussed with Edward Manby at the same time as the other, he thus, indeed, became a party concerned in this and in everything which related to the family. He entered heart and soul in the discussion of every question as if he were a member of it, and thus day after day, and almost hour after hour, he passed his time in company with the object of his affections, until his whole being was so identified with her image that he could scarcely live out of her presence.

In misfortune, springs of action are touched which in the flush of prosperity are not heeded. Sympathies are then created; whereas, in the sunshine of happiness, the heart is too apt to conclude that no distress can exist. Mary's feelings melted into gratitude towards Edward when she reflected how great and visible was the support which he afforded her uncle and aunts in these their days of misfortune;—his frank and smiling face came amongst them like a warm gleam acting upon a cheerless gloom: difficulties which appeared insurmountable, when they came to be talked over with him were deprived of half their perplexity; he always looked upon the brightest side of things—a quality of the mind which, in truth, can be outbalanced by no power of wealth.

It was imposible for two such beings to meet so constantly, and under the peculiar circumstances which drew them together, without mutually feeling those sentiments which, in the hearts of the virtuous and the high-principled, tend to develope the noblest qualities of the heart. Mary would frequently confide to Edward her desire to make herself useful to her family by hiring herself out as a governess, and she modestly hinted that what she wanted in abilities, she might make up in assiduity and attention to her duties. "She was ready," she said, "to go for the smallest sti-

pend, provided that stipend went to her relations; and by this means waiting for some favourable turn in their affairs, she hoped to ward off that desperate want which might assail them if something were not done." Edward opposed this with all his might. As soon as he could be of use, he insisted that his services might be made available. He did not depend, it is true, upon himself; but still his uncle at Liverpool, to whom he looked up from every feeling of affection and duty, was generous and ever ready to listen to any reasonable scheme that he might propose, and he trusted that through his means something would be struck out which might at least relieve them from the more immediate horrors of poverty.

These struggles of generosity did not fail to feed the flame of that pure love which was burning within their breasts; and although neither dared to own its existence, still it now formed as much a part of their being as the breath which came from their nostrils, or as the blood which circulated in their veins.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

One of the distresses incidental to human life are poor cousins. Happy they who go through the world so unafflicted!

The Allnutts in Golden-sqare lived totally ignorant of what was going on in the world, and even more so than in their seclusion at Ivycote. They knew no one—they never read a newspaper, and they were too much absorbed in brooding over their own calamities to care about politics, or to heed the hard race that was running between the two parties which then divided the country. Mark Woodcock was the only man who occasionally paid them a vist. Like every one who had ever seen Mary, he too had been captivated by her beauty; and whenever he could steal from his desk at Lincoln's Inn, he would always contrive some good pretext for visiting Golden-square. One morning he came earlier than usual, and as he entered the room where the family wese assembled, he exclaimed in a tone of exultation, "Well, have you heard the news?"

"What news?" said Aunt Bab.

"Why, the change of ministry, to be sure," said Mark: "the Tories have served it out properly, and the Whigs are floored." Upon which he explained himself in as intelligible a jargon as he could command, and exhibited a list of the new ministers as it stood proclaimed in a morning paper.

Little did either Barbara, Fanny, or Abel, and Mary still less, heed what he was propounding, or give ear to the names of the persons appointed to fill the different offices of the state, which he read *seriatim* with great emphasis. Their attention, however, was arrested when they heard him say, "Minister for foreign affairs, Earl of Knutsford."

"Abel! did you hear that?" exclaimed Barbara.

"I did indeed," said Abel; "but what then?"

"What then?" cried Bab; "a great deal, to be sure! Why you are an Allnutt as well as he—and why should he not help us?"

"*I* see no good reason why, I am sure," said Abel, smiling, "if *he* does not."

"If *he* does not!" said Barbara;—"and wherefore should he? If he does not know how near we are related, he must be informed of it; and then I am sure, if he possesses one ounce of the blood of an Allnutt within his veins, he will be too happy to help us."

"I for one," said Abel, "am ignorant how nearly we are related. I have always heard that we were of the same family as Lord Knutsford; but of the particulars of the relationship I know nothing."

"Then I'll tell you how it is," said Bab, "for I have often heard our dear father speak upon that subject. The present Lord Knutsford's father and our father had each of them three great-grandmothers.—No, that is not it—that is, that the first Lord Knutsford had three wives, and they each had children; therefore there were established three great-grandfathers—no, I mean three great-grandmothers. Well, each of these great-grandmothers had grandchildren——"

"They had children too, I am sure of that," said Fanny.

"I am not quite certain of that," said Bab: "however, that has nothing to do with the matter, because it stands to reason that if they had grandchildren, those children must have had fathers, anyhow. Therefore, as the present Lord Knutsford's father and our father had each of them the same great-grandfather, although a different great-grandmother, they came from the same stock, and as we are children of

our father, we come from the same stock too, and we become cousins, but of what numerical affinity, as our dear father would say, (and so would John too,) I really do not know."

"But still," said Fanny, after a moment of deep thought, "if the great-grandmothers were different, the great-grandchildren must be different too, and they can only be great-grandcousins on the father's side; and that's what Lord Knutsford is to us."

"There's no father's side or mother's side in cousins—they are all of one side," said Bab with great quickness in her accent.

"Well, then I am sure," said Fanny, "if we are all on the same side, the present Lord Knutsford ought to do something for us, and Abel ought to apply to him immediately."

"Yes, he ought," said Bab, "and will too. Let us see—Minister for foreign affairs—that is to say, that he can do all he likes about foreigners, Frenchmen, Turks, Spaniards, and East Indians—ay, and with Mexicans too. He may appoint John to direct the mines: and he could make Abel, I dare say, a Roman consul if he chose it."

"Not a consul," said Fanny; "for the ancient Greeks only did that; but I dare say he might make him an ambassador anyhow.

"I fear, my dear," said Abel, "that your are too sanguine in your hopes; but this I do think, that through his influence he may persuade the Mexican republic either to pay us back the capital which we have put into their funds, or at least continue to pay us the interest for it. This would not be much to ask from a distant cousin."

"That of course," exclaimed Bab, "is the least he can do for us: but he must do a great deal more, that's what he must. Let us ask Edward Manby what he can do;—I dare say he will know, as he does most things."

Mark Woodcock, after having created the sensation we have just described, took his leave, or, as he would say, "cut his stick;" and not long after appeared Edward, who was soon informed of the prospects which had all at once dawned upon the family. Having been asked in every sort of tone of inquiry what were the powers of a minister for foreign affairs, he professed general ignorance upon the subject; but he ventured to say what he thought he could not do.

When Barbara asserted that he ought to appoint John to

be the director of all the Mexican mines, he answered that as mining speculations were private or joint-stock speculations, they of course appointed their own officers, and that the king's minister could have no voice on the subject *ex officio*. Then, as to making the republic refund, he was obliged to destroy the castle which Abel had built, inasmuch as the government professed to take no part in foreign loans. But he thought that Fanny's scheme of making Abel a consul was more in his power than either of the two others, and therefore expressed it as his opinion that Abel might boldly venture to apply to him for some appointment of that sort, or for something at home.

This dictum of Edward's immediately became the subject of all their thoughts and the theme of all their talk. Barbara, little understanding the gradations of diplomatic rank and service, insisted upon it that they ought not to demand the consulship at first, as that might be too much—but that perhaps they might begin by making Abel a simple ambassador.

Fanny was soon in the clouds, and had already settled in her mind the foreign princes and counts who would be quarrelling among themselves to make an offer of their hand; whilst Mary sighed at the possibility of being separated from Edward. Abel, however, still steadily kept his eye upon their money in the Mexican funds, hoping that, being restored to it, he might again return to his beloved country retirement. But the result of their conference was that Abel should present himself to Lord Knutsford, and making known his relationship, state the situation of his family and ask for some sort of employment.

In order to put this scheme into execution, it was necessary to make Abel a little more presentable in his appearance than he usually was; for, with the view of economising to the utmost farthing, he did not allow himself the smallest luxury in dress. His sisters obliged him to have his hair cut, a new cravat was provided for the occasion, he exhibited a larger expanse of white linen than usual, and his coat was inspected, mended, newly buttoned and brushed. The day having been fixed for putting his scheme into execution, the whole family were busied in preparing him at least to look well. His boots were well polished, and with Aunt Bab's chain round his person, and with Fanny's best pocket-handkerchief in his pocket, he at length sallied forth, accompanied by Edward, to seek the regions of

Downing-street, where the new minister was known to transact the business of his office.

When they came in sight of the sentry stationed at the door, Edward left Abel, who, as soon as he found himself alone, felt possessed of new energies. He passed the sentry, and, with his heart in a flutter, opened the door, walked in, and being confronted with the porter, boldly inquired whether he could see Lord Knutsford. The porter, to his surprise, received him with becoming civility, and introducing him into the waiting-room, asked him for his card—an article which owing to Edward's foresight he was enabled to give. "Mr. Abel Allnutt, Golden-square," was inscribed thereupon in all proper form; and when the porter looked at it, Abel thought that his face betrayed approbation.

Having taken possession of an arm-chair, he sat for some time well satisfied to have an opportunity to collect his thoughts. He settled in his mind everything that he would say to his cousin;—first the passing hint of their relationship, and the short history of his branch of the family, then his brother John's schemes, and particularly the one which at his instigation they had adopted, of transferring their fortune from the English to the Mexican funds; then the ruin that ensued thereupon—the sale of their house at Ivycote—their migration to Golden-square—their present difficulties, and consequently their recurrence to his assistance. He was disturbed in his cogitations every now and then by some one putting his head within the door and drawing it out again; but otherwise he was left entirely to himself, and for so long a time, that he began to feel uneasy lest all was not as it should be. However, after he had sat two hours and a half, suddenly a well-dressed man entered, and calling him by name, invited Abel to follow him. Instantly all his coolness and self-possession forsook him—his heart beat strong, and he followed his conductor in a great state of perturbation, so entirely new was he to such scenes. He was conducted across halls, through passages, up and down staircases, into rooms, and at length came to a door which was opened with a certain degree of deference by his conductor, and soon he found himself in the presence of one whom he took for Lord Knutsford.

The person before whom he stood was one calculated to produce awe in the breast of a mere man of the fields more by the manner in which he was surrounded than by his own personal appearance. He was seated before a large and

massive writing-table, heaped over with every implement of writing that the imagination can conceive: papers of every description lay about in heaps, some carefully tied up with red tape, and others open as if under inspection. Every contrivance for the assortment and classification of letters and documents was here seen; whilst innumerable leather-covered boxes of every size, colour, and denomination were strewed about in heaps ready for use. In distant corners of the room sat two other persons apparently absorbed in the papers before them; whilst the chief was at his post ready to superintend the work that was going forward. He was a man of pleasant aspect and agreeable manners, and when Abel approached, received him with as much politeness and urbanity as if he were honoured by his visit.

There was an appearance of mystery and secrecy in this apartment so pregnant with business, so fitted up with everything relating to matters of serious import, that Abel's heart quite sank within him when he recollected the insignificance of his own poor affairs. All his preconcerted speech fled from his memory; he made an awkward bow, and mechanically seated himself on the chair which was presented to him. He was, however, so much relieved by the ease and charm of manner in the person who received him, that he began after a short pause to find himself restored to his self-possession. Still taking the individual before him for Lord Knutsford, and thinking that in him he saw a relation, he very soon entered upon the history of his family, and went into a series of intricate details relating to the different individuals composing it, which he thought might be interesting matter of information. He was beginning to touch upon the histories of his brother and sisters, when his auditor gradualiy led him off the subject to inquire what might be the real object of his visit.

Abel, having acquired confidence, was not disconcerted, and giving a simple statement of his personal difficulties, he asked for employment—in short, for a situation under government. The gentleman having heard him out with exemplary patience, considering that he was not Lord Knutsford, and therefore little interested in the Allnutt genealogy, then addressed him in a few words,—told him of the immense number of applications with which the government was beset for places, descanted upon the pain of public functionaries in being constantly obliged to refuse the claims of merit, avowed how happy he would be to serve him were it in his power, said something about private family

claims—"a subject," he said, "upon which he was not competent to judge,"—and with a variety of agreeable-sounding words, accompanied by smiles and a slight though gradual pressure towards the door, he succeeded in guiding Abel to that orifice; into which having once successfully secured him, he made him a bow, and the door shutting Abel on the out side and himself within, the conference thus came to an end.

Having once more reached the street, Abel walked down it with a slow and thoughtful step. He had gained nothing by his visit excepting the certainty of the loss of his former hopes; nor was he quite certain whether or not he had seen Lord Knutsford. During the visit, he considered himself as being in his presence; but when it was over, he recollected certain occurrences which made him doubt whether it might not have been somebody else. In this state of perplexity he returned home but little pleased with the result of his morning's work, and almost afraid to meet Barbara and the inquiries which she would not fail to make. But there was one thing which he was not afraid to encounter—and that was the scrutiny of his own breast. There, amid all the cares, the disappointments, and the vexations which surrounded him, he was sure to find a still, small voice, which, as it were, from the inmost recesses of his soul would speak the language of comfort and encouragement, and tell him to persevere to the last.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Abel Allnutt offers himself for a tutor, and proves the disadvantage of homely looks.

As soon as Abel rapped at the door, Mary, who had learned to recognise his mode of announcing himself, cried out, "Oh, here is Uncle Abel!" and he very soon after appeared.

"Well, Abel, what has happened?" cried Barbara.

"What sort of a looking man is he?" said Fanny.

"My dear uncle," said Mary, "I am afraid you want something to eat—you look sadly tired!"

Abel was inclined to say but little; Bab, however, soon

let him know that he had much to undergo. "Have you seen Lord Knutsford?" she said.

"I believe I have," said Abel: "but really I cannot say for certain whether I have or not."

"You *believe* you have!" exclaimed Barbara. "How! do you only believe?—arn't you certain that you have seen him?"

"I was introduced to a most agreeable man whom I took for him. I told him the whole of our story—I talked to him of our family, and initiated him into all our family matters: he heard me patiently. I conceived all the while that I was talking to Lord Knutsford; but when he remarked, 'that as for family claims, he was not competent to judge of them,' and informed me that owing to the great number of prior applicants I had no chance of employment, I began to suspect that he was not our cousin; and somehow or other, agreeable and pleasant though he was, in some unaccountable manner I suddenly found myself without the door. That is all that I can say for myself."

"Well, I never heard the like of this!" exclaimed Barbara. "You spoke to a man for half an honr, and you say you do not know who he was! How did he look? It stands to reason that an earl and a minister must be different in appearance to other men. Did he not wear robes and garters, as we hear they all do?"

"He looked exactly like any other man," said Abel, "only a great deal more polite. I felt somehow entirely at my ease before him, and could not help being pleased with him, although he told me that he could do nothing for us."

"Then certainly he was not our cousin the earl," said Bab. "You must have been taken in by some swindler—some one must have practised a hoax upon you—that is quite clear: an earl has always a silver star on his breast and a large riband over his shoulder—his hair is always well-powdered—he always wears silk-stockings, and a sword by his side. Now, if you did not see such a man, it stands to reason that you have been hoaxed."

"All I can say is this," said Abel,—"that when I walked in, I asked the servant for Lord Knutsford: he seemed very well to know who he was. Then I waited two hours and a half in a room by myself; and afterwards, I was taken into another room, where I saw a courteous gentleman, and him I took to be our cousin."

"You may be certain that during those two hours and a half," said Bab, "the hoax was got up against you: I wish Edward Manby were here—he'd tell you the same thing. Nothing can be so wicked as these Londoners—you know that Mark Woodcock has warned us against them; and notwithstanding the lesson you got from that odious woman of the Fleece and her Punch, here you are the first to fall a prey to their tricks."

"I doubt very much," said Abel, "whether the gentleman I saw could act like a swindler if he were to try, he was so well bred."

"I recollect very well," said Bab, "when I was a little girl, going to the family seat and seeing the family pictures; and all the Earls of Knutsford were dressed in the manner I have described, only some had robes and garters on. It is quite plain you did not see the present lord.—But here comes Edward, and he will enlighten us."

Edward arrived in anxious expectation to hear the result of Abel's visit; and when the progress of it was related to him, he said at once that he could not have seen Lord Knutsford, but evidently had been taken to the under secretary of state, for he recollected that a friend of his had told him that he had been treated in the selfsame manner at the Foreign Office.

Barbara would not be satisfied with this explanation, but insisted upon her view of the hoax being the right one; whilst Aunt Fanny immediately instituted a general inquiry upon under secretaries of state, and endeavoured to ascertain whether they were all as agreeable as the one Abel had described, and where they could be seen.

A strong principle of action founded upon a right basis is like the beacon to which the mariner returns when he is out of his reckoning, in order to take a fresh departure. Abel cherished that species of hope within his breast which was not to be extinguished by disappointment: he was confident, although the aspect of his affairs was at present dark and threatening, that sooner or later it would brighten up and give him happier days. But still he was distressed at his total want of success, which he would have borne with greater fortitude, had he no other cause of anxiety; but his mind was disturbed by apprehension at not hearing from John. Since the account of his arrival at Vera Cruz, not a line had been received from him: there were no tidings of him in the city among the Mining Companies; and al-

though he was supposed to be on his way back, yet nothing certain concerning his movements had been ascertained.

Edward scarcely ever passed a day without making inquiries upon that head, so anxious was he to bring consolation to Mary, who, ever since she had contemplated the possibility of soon seeing her father, could scarcely think of anything else. In the mean while, the small sum which the family had in store for their immediate necessities was daily diminishing, and they looked with dread upon the day when the rent of their lodging would be due.

The family frequently discussed their miseries and their schemes in the presence of Mark Woodcock, who, being a good-hearted, serviceable youth, took great interest in their welfare. Some time after the failure we have just described, he one morning came in great haste to inform Abel that his chief, Mr. Fairfax by name, a solicitor of eminence, had been desired by one of his clients, a man of fortune, to seek a tutor for his sons, and conceiving that the situation might suit him, he had requested Mr. Fairfax's permission to make him an offer.

The proposal was received with the greatest joy by Aunt Bab, who, looking upon Abel as a property of which she might dispose without an appeal to his will, would have agreed to it upon the spot, had she not been stopped by Abel. His conscience always chose to become very tender whenever it was required of him to assert his own merits, and accordingly on this occasion he avowed that he did not feel himself qualified to undertake such an office.

"Give me one good reason for your refusal," said Barbara, "and I will urge the matter no more."

"I am not sufficietly well educated myself to be able to teach others," said Abel: "I cannot set up for a tutor when I am myself untutored."

"How can you say that!" said Bab. "You know very well that I myself taught you to read and write; and as for your Latin, I am sure you know enough of that at any rate to puzzle Merriman our schoolmaster; not to mention your flute."

Mark put an end to this discussion by asserting that the gentleman in question was more anxious to secure a trustworthy person who would look after the morals and conduct of his pupils, than one who could teach Latin and Greek; and again expressed his own opinion, as well as that of his chief, that the place would exactly suit Abel: the salary

would be handsome, the labour small, and the youths were reputed to be everything that was desirable.

Under such circumstances, Abel could no longer object to the proposal, and he begged to know when and where he could present himself. In making this decision, his self-devotion may perhaps be appreciated by those who reflect what had been the happiness of his former life, and what is too frequently the lot of a tutor; who, often with the feelings and education of a gentleman, drops, as it were, from the clouds into a family circle, and straightway forms a sort of connecting link between the master and the domestics—belonging to neither class, but partaking of the nature of both;—who in the midst of society is generally left in solitude, whose only associates are his pupils, and who, besides, is often the victim of caprice and malevolence. To meet such a prospect requires great magnanimity, when the motives which impel him who accepts of the situation are similar to those which actuated Abel. He perhaps did not know all he was about to encounter; but this he foresaw,—that he would be separated from those who were dearer to him than life—that he would be obliged to acquire new habits, and conform himself to the wishes of others, when he felt that he would fall very far short of the expectations that might be entertained of his abilities.

However, upon receiving a notification from Mr. Fairfax of the name and address of the person to be visited he prepared himself for the ordeal he was likely to undergo with all the courage he could muster. Mary almost cried when she saw him sally forth in quest of this situation, so fearful was she of a separation; and Barbara hoped that the necessity for this step would only be temporary; whilst Fanny consoled herself with the hope of making new acquaintances.

Abel reached a large handsome house in Portland-place just as the clock struck ten: he had been told to call early, and as he always rose himself at seven, he thought that hour must be quite proper. He was received by a footman and introduced into the dining room without perceiving the smallest circumstance of distinction in his mode of reception. He was requested to wait until the master should be apprised of his arrival: this was but a short interval, for the same servant again appeared and desired him to follow. He accompanied him up stairs to the drawing-room floor, and thence to the bed-rooms; and without further ceremony was introduced into a dressing-room, in which were displayed

all the apparatus and preliminaries of a toilet. At the farther end stood a tall man, dressed in a morning gown, who apparently had just risen from bed. When he saw Abel, he made him no sort of compliment, but kept him for a moment in attendance whilst he adjusted part of his dress, and then said, "Well, are you ready?"

Abel looked astonished; but as humility was his great characteristic, he thought that it was the usual fate of tutors to be treated with contumely, and answered, "Yes, sir, I am ready—I am at your service."

"So am I," said the gentleman: "I wish that you had come at least a week ago."

"I did know of your wishes before yesterday," said Abel, "or I should have been happy to have waited upon you."

"You are not to blame," said the other; "but they have grown uncommonly this week past, and wanted your assistance."

Abel again was surprised—How was it possible, thought he, that his pupils could have grown so much in so short a space of time; and why was his assistance so immediately necessary! "Have they?" said Abel. "I hope we shall soon make up for lost time!"

"I hope you will," said the gentleman, who all this while seemed taken up in the inspection of his feet, which were naked and only protected from the ground by a slipper. "They will require all your skill, I can tell you," said he; "for they are very difficult to deal with."

"I will do my best," said Abel, beginning to be more and more surprised at this sort of preliminary talk, and which he expected would lead to some severe examination.

"You are come prepared I hope?" said the gentleman, turning round upon him and looking well at him.

"Yes, sir," said Abel; "I hope that you will approve of me."

Upon which the other, taking one foot from out of his slipper, tossed it into the air, and twirling it about, said to the astonished Abel, "You see, they are good large ones!"

"Yes," said Abel with awkward hesitation—"Yes, they are large;"—but not able in the least to understand what a man's feet could have to do with a tutor's duty.

"Well, sir," said the gentleman, "begin."

"Begin what?" said Abel, doubting the sanity of the individual's brain, and taking possession of the handle of the door, as a precaution.

"Begin what!" said the other: "why to cut, to be sure! —Come, sir! cut away—cut them off at once!"

"Cut away! Cut what?" said Abel; when seeing the gentleman flourish the other foot and walk towards him, he no longer doubted that he had got into the house of a madman, and straightway rushing out, shut the door after him, ran down stairs with all posible speed without once looking behind, and gaining the principal entrance, got into the street with the activity of one pursued. Neither looking to the right nor left, he only stopped when he reached his own door; and then, quite out of breath, finding himself face to face with his sisters and niece, to their utter astonishment, he burst out a-laughing. This, so rare an occurrence, produced an uncommon sensation among them, and they in their turn thought a temporary derangement must have seized him. They gathered round with anxious faces—for ill timed merriment seldom produces sympathy—and began to inquire the cause of his so speedy return and of his extraordinary conduct.

After some little time, having at length collected his scattered ideas, he gave a full and complete narration of his adventure, the result of which puzzled his hearers as much as it had done himself.

"He was preparing to kick you down stairs?" said Bab.

"What could he mean by flourishing about his nasty naked feet?" said Fanny.

"I am so glad you're come back to us!" said Mary.

Had they, however, been acquainted with the real story, they too, perhaps, would have been partakers of Abel's merriment, although it would have been at his expense; for be it known that the worthy gentleman in Portland, place had made an appointment with his corn-cutter at the very hour that Abel arrived, and as Abel's appearance, without any great stretch of imagination, might very well have made him pass for what our French neighbours have dignified by the name of *artiste pédecure*, it is not extraordinary that the footman took him for that useful personage, and that his master adopted the mistake. It never occurred to them for a moment that Abel was the tutor announced by Mr. Fairfax, for he did not look like one; and besides, so exalted a person would not have appeared so early, and would have been announced more emphatically. Even when he made his abrupt exit, the mistake was not discovered; for the gentleman in question actually

remained with one leg in the air with surprise, and concluded, in his turn, that the corn-cutter had suddenly run clean out of his wits—and as he thought that he might be running all day, so he took no trouble to run after him.

CHAPTER XXX.

The family are both cheered and mortified in their misfortunes. A lesson on economy.

The situation of the Allnutts may be compared to that of a crew in a ship becalmed under the line, their provisions running short, with every prospect of starvation before their eyes should the calm continue. They felt the same sort of despondency, the same apprehensions of being reduced to the greatet straits, and the same hope of some favourable gale springing up which would drive them out of their present embarrassment and take them into more favourable latitudes. The merriment which we recorded in our last chapter was of short duration: it only served to make the despondency which succeeded more deep, and they daily more and more began, as it were, to touch their future destiny. Spring had now advanced;—the few black bushes in the enclosure before them, as if to put them in mind that Nature, which they all so ardently adored was immutable in her work, and dispensed her gifts to the wretched as well as to the prosperous, began to exhibit a new dress; and the vivid green starting out of the smoky branches appeared as the work of a miracle, were it not that a miracle of every day occurrence is no longer such in the eyes of unthinking mortals.

Mary was standing at the window, sighing over the recollections of Ivycote, admiring the beautiful colour as it burst forth almost perceptibly to the sight, and hoping that by some kind dispensation of Providence they might be released from their present confinement, when all at once a flaring, gaudy carriage, well bedaubed with escutcheons and bedizend with plated ornaments, drove into the square, and, strange to relate, stopped at their door. A stout footman staggering under a long cane and matted tags, and with difficulty waddling in his stiff plushes, applied his hand to the

knocker and inflicted a succession of resounding blows, which made the hearts of the inmates jump in their breasts, and caused a reverberation throughout the square.

"What in the name of goodness is that?" said Bab.

"I declare it is a fine carriage!" exclaimed Fanny, taking a peep over Mary's shoulder. "Here, put away these things—quick!" Upon which she rushed about the room, thrusting Abel's stockings, which Mary had been darning, under the sofa-cushion; disposing of her own petticoat, which she had been piecing, by throwing it into the adjoining room; taking the kettle from off the fire, and hiding it behind the screen; smoothing down her locks, adjusting her gown, taking off her apron,—in short, doing that which is almost part of an Englishwoman's religion—making herself tidy.

Mary watched the motions of the carriage and the footman like one on the look-out to espy the approach of some great personage.

"They are talking to the footman," she said. "There are ladies in the carriage. I think it is the Goold Woodby livery—the servant is now saying something to Betty—Betty is making curtsies—they are giving cards."

"Arn't they coming up?" cried Fanny in astonishment.

"No, I think not," said Mary;—"yes, they are—no, they are not—yes, they are—no—yes:—the servant is just going to open the door—no, he has shut it again:—they have left a whole pack of cards—Betty is making more curtsies—the footman is getting up behind;—there they go!—they are gone!" The carriage was heard to rumble away, and Fanny was left all bewildered with agitation; Aunt Bab became thoughtful, and Mary was both amused and astonished. Abel came in soon after followed by old Betty, who made a display of the cards she had received, on which were inscribed the names of Mrs. Goold Woodby, attended by a whole catalogue of daughters, and the place of abode, Baker-street.

"Did they know that we were at home?" said Aunt Bab to Betty.

"Yes, sure," said the old servant. "I told them that you were all here, and that you were purely, saving Miss Fanny, who had been rather queer of late."

"And did not they ask to come up?"

"Why, they all talked together; some wanted to come, others did not," said Betty: "until I heard the old lady say, 'Cards will do,' and they drove off again."

"Well, I do declare!" exclaimed Fanny, "there never was anything so unkind."

Bab held her tongue, for she would not venture to trust herself with an expression of her feelings, but Abel, thinking this a proper moment to make a solemn impression upon his sisters, and to attack that pride of heart which every day told him still hung about them, said, "This is only the first specimen which we have had of the way of the world. We have read of it, and it has passed into a proverb—but this is it, now we see it. The prosperous shun those who are in adversity—this is as it should be; for the one assimilates as little with the other as a lighted taper with the close air of a cavern: it is only those privileged by the possession of superior minds and of hearts exalted by benignity, to seek the abodes of the poor and the rejected, and make their misery their own. My dear sisters, let us learn by the instance we have had this morning how hollow are those sort of intimacies which go by the name of friendship. The Goold Woodbys have made us a parading visit; and I should be inclined to feel the comparisons to which such a parade naturally lead as strongly as I see you do, had I not already taught myself to expect neglect not only from them, but from all those who were our associates in our better days."

"Considering that they are the cause of our present misfortune," said Bab with suppressed anger, "I think they might have asked to see us."

"I should like to know," said Fanny, "how they venture to give themselves such airs!—odious, purse-proud shopkeepers! thinking they are doing us an honour by sending us these bits of pasteboard, with their ignoble names inscribed upon them!"

"My dear Fanny," said Abel, "in God's name let us not lose all the advantages which the lesson now dispensed to us by adversity ought to afford! If properly received, it cannot fail of producing the most beneficial results—results by which we shall be purged from that most hateful vice, pride; and from which we may hope to reap the benefit of that most inestimable virtue, humility. It is a great privilege to be so visited—it may be our salvation: when this world and all its fascinations shall have passed away, and when we shall be where every one born of woman must sooner or later be—on the verge of the grave and of eternity, then we shall bless the hand that chastened us, and brought us, ere it was too late, to a proper sense of the utter nothingness of this life!"

These observations had their due effect, and tended very much to remove the angry feelings which Mrs. Woodby's ostentatious visit had excited, They could not, however, abstain from discussing the matter at full length as soon as Edward Manby appeared; and after he had received a full and detailed account of the whole transaction, he told them what they did not know,—that it had become very much the fashion to make a card perform as proxy the whole business of a visit, and that the visiter's name upon a piece of paper was considered to stand in lieu of 'How do you do?' 'Very well;' 'It's very fine weather;'—'I'm your humble servant;'—which is generally the sum total of one of those unmeaning visitations, a morning call.

This piece of information tended still more than Abel's homily to pacify them; and they had scarcely done forgiving the supposed unkindness, when another loud rap at the door was heard, followed up by the appearance of Mr. Thomas Goold Woodby, junior, in person, to pay his respects. This visit altogether calmed the irritation, because he confirmed what Edward had asserted, by saying that his mother and sisters had scarcely yet had an opportunity to announce their arrival in town, and that they had that very morning sallied out for the first time to leave their cards."

"They might as well come up," said Bab, "to see their old friends, although we have nothing to give them now excepting a hearty welcome."

"Indeed," said Fanny, adopting the same tone, "it would have been but kind to take a look at us, although we haven't as good a luncheon to offer as we had at Ivycote."

Tom threw as much softness as he could into his bull-dog countenance, glancing all the time at the unconscious Mary, and said, "London being so different from the country, nobody could expect to see each other except by snatches at uncertain times; but," he added with a certain pomp and emphasis, "in order to secure a meeting, I am come to invite you to dinner, which, after all, is the surest way in London to meet."

This piece of attention entirely dispelled any remains of ill-feeling; and Bab and Fanny looked at each other uncertain what to answer. Many considerations would make them pause ere they could consent to so unexpected a proposal, for much was to be considered—expense—dress—and mode of conveyance. The general desire was to go, for Barbara wished once more to meet old Woodby, to give him a piece of her mind upon Mexican bonds; Fanny

was always for an outing; and Abel, whose whole heart and soul were engrossed in providing for his family, thought he might find an opening for proposing himself as a teacher of the flute, which was now, as he thought, their almost last resource. Mary was the only one who gave a dissentient voice, for she shunned every opportunity of being in company with Tom Woodby.

As soon as this young gentleman had taken his leave, which he did saying that his mother would send the proper card of invitation when the day was fixed, the family council opened their deliberations. They talked long and took enlarged views of the case. Abel thought the proper way of looking at the question was to balance the certain expense which they must incur with the uncertain advantages; for his part, he was of opinion, in their needy situation, that friends were absolutely necessary to them—friends who would further any scheme they might have of gaining a livelihood: he wished himself to give lessons on the flute, which he felt fully competent to do; and therefore by accepting the proposed invitation he expected to find a good opportunity of opening his plan to such friends as he might meet. Barbara applauded his scheme, and moreover added, that she, perhaps, might have an opportunity of hinting to old Woodby, that as he had been such a gainer by the Mexican bond transaction, he ought in justice to help them. Abel entreated her not to buoy herself up with such a hope and not to expect generosity from one who could have so taken advantage of ignorance. Providence and their own exertions, he asserted, must now be their main dependence; and he made no doubt that however distressed they might become, yet still if they exerted their best energies, and kept their conscience clear, they would not fail to enjoy peace of mind, in itself a greater blessing than all that the Woodby wealth could bestow. Fanny remarked, were it only for health's sake, they ought to seek a little dissipation and that it was unfair to let a young person like Mary sit moping all day long in the house unknown and unseen. Mary did not allow herself to give an opinion, excepting to assure Aunt Fanny that as far as she was personally concerned, she was perfectly contented and happy never to stir from home.

When the card came, it was paraded with great state into the drawing-room by the astounded Betty, who having received it from a brilliant lackey, eyed it as a mandate from royalty itself. The consequence was the acceptance of the

invitation, and Aunt Fanny was empowered to send a proper answer. Thence ensued an animated discussion upon dress. As a week would elapse ere the event took place sufficient time was left for preparation. Fanny's ingenuity was required to compose new dresses out of old ones; and she exercised it so effectually, that unless to those who had witnessed the *début* of the gray gown and the cherry-coloured silk at Belvedere Hall, no one could imagine that they had already seen a summer in the country.

The greatest difficulty to be overcome was the acquisition of a pair of new pantaloons for Uncle Abel. By no contrivance could drab be made to look black at night; and as it has become part of a man's system of ethics to dine out in black pantaloons, so it became imperative upon Abel either to procure such a commodity, or not to go. Chancing to walk through a by-lane thinking over this subject, his eyes fell upon the notices in the shop-window of an obscure tailor, and there he found that the very thing he wanted was pressingly offered for twelve shillings. This was so inviting, that he made up his mind immediately to accede to it, walked into the shop, was well received by a small oblique-looking man, and straightway was measured. He returned to his sisters triumphant, and told them how well he had been aided by fortune, and that all difficulties were now overcome.

In the course of two days arrived the tailor, the bill, and the pantaloons. Abel hurried to try them on; but what was his dismay when, having succeeded in introducing his legs, he stuck somewhere in the same part as Gulliver did when he was thrust into the marrow-bone at Brobdignag! At length, at the risk of splitting, he managed to get entirely in; but having done so, he could not move—a step would have ripped open every seam, and he expostulated to the tailor in these words:

"This will never do—these things are a great deal too tight."

"Are they?" said the tailor.

"Yes; don't you see?" said Abel.

"They *are* a little tight," said the tailor; "but they'll soon stretch.

"I can scarcely walk in them," said Abel.

"I think they will do very well," said the tailor.

"No, they won't do at all," said Abel; "I can't straddle in them."

"Straddle!" said the tailor; "no, I didn't suppose you

could! Who ever thonght of straddling for twelve shillings?"

This was a view of the question which Abel had never taken, and to which he knew not what to answer; but it gave him an opportunity of making this reflection—that things which are extravagantly cheap, are on the whole dearer than things extravagantly the contrary.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"C'est l'occasion qui fait le larron." Love, like murder, will out.

Since the first commencement of the rivalry for Mary's favour, Tom Woodby and Edward Manby had never been friends. Tom, vain of his person and proud of his expectations, was also envious and implacable. He could never conceive that one so poor, so lowly, and of such little note as Edward could be preferred before him, and he lost no opportunity of exhibiting the bitterness of his dislike and the meanness of his spites. He was the cause of his not being invited to the dinner; a slight which Edward felt as young men are apt to feel on such occasions, particularly when their friends are few and their fortunes small. Everything was in progress in Golden-square in preparation for the dinner, and the hour was fast approaching.

On the day before this event was to take place, Edward arrived greatly agitated in Golden-square. Abel was not at home: he met Aunt Bab and Fanny on the stairs just going out to purchase some necessary bit of dress: they stopped him, and observing his hasty and perturbed look, inquired what was the matter? "I am obliged to go to Liverpool immediately," said Edward. They requested him to wait for them in the drawing-room, saying that they would soon return. When he entered that room, he found Mary by herself. He had never yet had an opportunity of seeing her alone, and in truth he had always dreaded it—so full of undefined apprehension and secret misgiving is the real passion of love. He had been a thousand times on the point of disclosing to her by writing what she must long have known, the ardent sentiments of his heart; yet he always

checked himself by those cogent reflections which we have before described: but now his heart was too full, and the opportunity too inviting to allow the control of the dictates of prudence. She evidently discovered, by his manner and countenance, that something unusual had happened; and as she saw him approach, her heart beat violently, whilst her face was covered with blushes. He began by informing her of the necessity of his speedy departure; that he had that morning received a letter from his uncle, in which he was upbraided for his long absence; and informed that his affairs required his immediate return, and in short, that various other reasons urged were too powerful for him to resist. He said that he was too much indebted to his uncle for his constant kind behaviour not immediately to attend to his wishes, and therefore he was determined to obey his call.

Edward perceived that at the first announcement of this piece of intelligence to Mary, she was visibly affected: its sudden disclosure had taken her unawares, and she could not conceal how much she felt the loss she was about to sustain. This tacit acknowledgment of the interest she took in his fate entirely overthrew the little power he still retained over himself; and ere a minute had elapsed, he had made a full and passionate avowal of his love, and opened to her, in simple, sincere, and unstudied language, every thought and feeling of his heart, entreating her by all that was pure and tender to allow him to live in hope that he might one day call her his own.

How could Mary conceal from him what every look and action had so long disclosed? She fully avowed her sentiments; and having done this, she said, "But, Edward, when I have told you thus much, I feel that there I must stop!—Her eyes filled with tears, and her bosom swelled with strong emotion; and then exerting evident violence over herself, she continued: "I cannot and will not bind myself to any other being in this world so long as I see my uncle and aunts in this state of want to which they are soon too likely to be reduced! Putting the promise I have made to my father never to marry without his consent out of the question, everything tells me that I am theirs as long as this state of trial to which they are exposed lasts. God's will be done!—He alone knows what is for our good: but my duty is plain—never will I give this hand to any one unless by so doing I can prevent the misery of these my dear relations. You, Edward—kind, feeling, generous as you are,

I am sure will understand me. You will even second my resolution! Let us here swear that no selfish feeling of ours shall ever interfere to destroy this sacred intention!"

Edward was affected to tears by the touching simplicity of heart and exalted virtue which shone forth in every look, word, and expression of the gentle being before him. He would have exacted some more definite promise from her, but that he feared to hurt those generous feelings of devotion to her relations which actuated her; and he felt that for the present he must remain satisfied with the simple assurance of her love. This certainty, secured to him by the warrant of her own lips, infused an instantaneous feeling of satisfaction throughout his being, and comforted him in the doleful separation which was about to ensue. They dwelt long upon the many and various possibilities which constitute that large circumference of hope so apt to surround the hearts of the wretched—they contemplated the probability of affairs taking a favourable turn in Mexico, by which her uncle and aunts would be restored to their independence—they discussed the hope of soon seeing Mary's father, upon which so much of their welfare depended; and then Edward, with all the language and confidence of youth, cheered up her drooping spirits by adverting to his own prospects, which, owing to the kindness of his uncle, whom he was now going to propitiate, he asserted were likely to be soon very prosperous.

By the time they had poured out the whole effusion of their hearts, and vowed those thousand protestations of eternal love which are always better imagined by the reader than expressed by the writer, the return of Aunt Barbara and Fanny was announced; and though no time is ever long enough for lovers, yet on this occasion its lapse became a matter of consequence, since at a fixed hour Edward was obliged to take his departure. Abel returned opportunely to see him before he went; and having extorted a promise from him to write often, he left the house,—we will not venture to say for what length of time.

Edward's departure produced a great blank in the family —for he was not only an agreeable companion, but also its friend and adviser. It would be difficult to say who loved him the most: Barbara could do nothing without his advice; Fanny's affection for him was of so vacillating a nature, that it usually vibrated between friendship and love; whilst Abel's esteem for his high qualities was of the most exalted kind, for he entirely came up to his ideas of what a man

ought to be. With such feelings, perhaps it will not be thought extraordinary that neither the uncle nor the aunts had remarked, nor had it ever entered their heads to suppose, that there existed between him and Mary any sentiment beyond that of common friendship. Time had passed on in such dull uniformity, that nothing ever occurred to excite the passion they mutually felt into anything beyond the casual and daily acts of attention and intimacy. So little were they aware of the real truth, that it was their habit frequently to speculate upon the person to whom they would accord their darling niece. They scarcely knew any young men besides Tom Woodby and Edward: and as they never contemplated any attentions from the one, so they generally decided that the other would be a very desirable match. His behaviour since his family had come to town had very much reconciled them to him; Barbara thought it very civil on his part to pay them a visit purposely to ask them to dinner; Fanny asserted that he was a very genteel young man, and Abel, who had long foreseen all the miseries of poverty, would often speculate as to the eligibility of marrying his niece to so wealthy a man, in order to screen her from the wretchedness in prospect. They therefore constantly urged Mary to receive him with more alacrity than she was accustomed to show when he appeared.

The very morning of Edward's departure, when poor Mary's bosom heaved with sorrow, and she appeared visibly dejected, the very subject she most avoided was brought under discussion. "We must endeavour to compensate for Edward's absence by making a great deal more of Tom Woodby than we have done," said Aunt Bab. "It stands to reason that if he's discouraged he won't come near us. My dear Mary," (addressing her,) "I wish you would manage to make yourself agreeable to him!—you do always so keep him at a distance, that it is quite shocking to see you!"

"I'm quite certain," said Fanny, "if Mary would only look at him straight, take her head from off her work when he talks to her, and give him good long answers, not short 'Noes,' without a single 'Yes' to bless himself with, he would be as easy and comfortable with us as an old shoe."

Abel would have said something also, but that he remarked the subject was disagreeable to her. He approached her, and taking her hand, said, "I am afraid, my dear, that you are not very well: let us hope that a little dissipation will do you good. You have been oppressed by the dull

life we lead: to-morrow you will go out and see some new faces—I fear you will sadly tire of ours."

Mary's heart was full, and this act of kindness made it overflow. She burst into tears, and kissing her uncle with affection, left the room.

"I am afraid that poor dear," said Fanny, "is sadly moped: she has not had a bit of gaiety, excepting the hand-organs and hurdy-gurdies in the square, since we have been here. She must positively go out—I wish the Goold Woodbys were giving a ball instead of a dinner to-morrow."

"It stands to reason," said Aunt Bab, "that young things like her must have gaiety, or else they will die. I recollect very well when I was young, I nearly killed myself by teaching the charity children in our village to sing the hundredth Psalm—it was so dull and they were so obstinate: but a good game at blindman's buff put it all to rights—and so will the Woodby's dinner put Mary to rights."

"You do not think that Tom Woodby can have proposed to her yet?" said Fanny with a mysterious air. "You know few young girls can be asked the question without wincing—and I think all that crying and seriousness looks very suspicious. I recollect very well, when that Captain Rawbone had the impertinence to propose for me, with his red whiskers and freckled skin, I was so put out for a day or two that I could not eat, and got as thin as my stays through fretting."

"I think what you now suggest to be impossible;" said Bab; "because Mary tells us everything the very moment it happens. She's not a girl to keep anything to herself, all excepting her fear for her dear father's safety; I am afraid that does weigh upon her heavily: poor thing! how she does dote upon him!"

God's will be done!" said Abel with a deep sigh and a most reverential tone of voice. "If we do not hear from him soon, I shall begin to be anxious."

The conversation which had so unseasonably taken place concerning Tom Woodby, had in truth been the cause of Mary's retreat to her room. Coming almost immediately upon the back of her explanation with Edward, it had shocked her, because she felt, now that he was gone, how much she would be exposed to the attentions and observation of his rival. She quite loathed his sight—and with good reason, for the motives which impelled him were in every way most wicked and profligate.

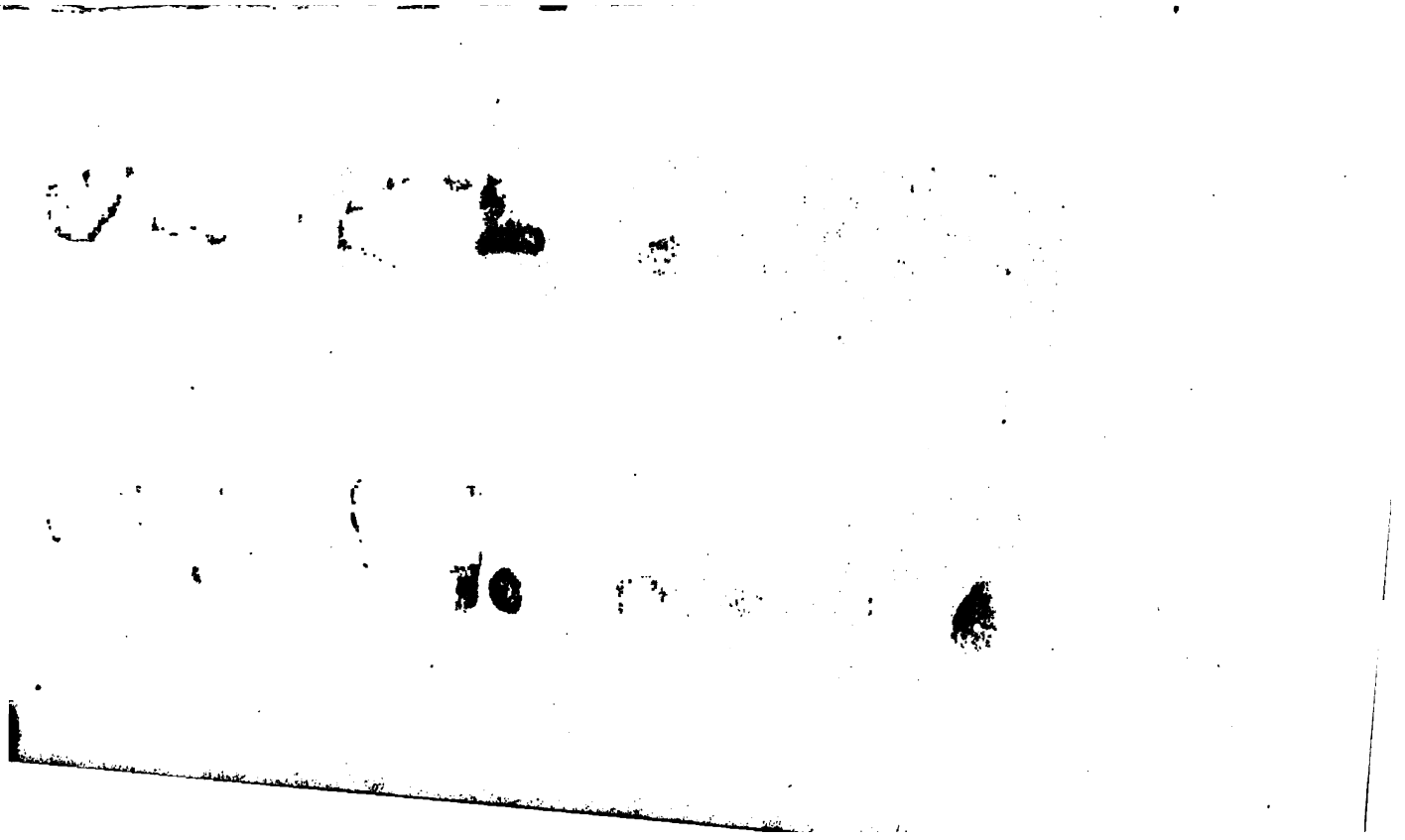
This young gentleman's ambition was to be thought a

man of fashion and pleasure. He was encouraged by his foolish mother and sisters in this pursuit; but ignorant as he was of the many requisites which make up that character his vulgar mind could only imagine the depravity and the vice, without including any of the refinement so essential to its complete formation. He provided himself with all the proper exteriors, and then thought that he might compete with the best in the land. His little person was dressed out with scrupulous precision; he kept aloof from the common herd, and disdaining to make use of his legs, was carried about at the tail of a tall horse, escorted by a wretched boy in the guise of a groom. He did his best to get into good clubs, but not gaining admittance there, he became a swaggering member of the worst.

When the ruin of the Allnutts was announced, his wicked heart beat with joy; for nothing more was wanting to complete his equipment than to become the tyrant over some weak and wretched outcast—nay, his malignant desires dared soar to the possession of the pure and gentle Mary, particularly as in compassing her ruin, he intended to exhibit his superiority as well as his contempt for his more favoured rival Edward. It was he who insisted with his parents that they should visit the family, and invite them to dinner. This had been a subject of fierce contention at home; but Tom's determined resolution carried the day—he had laid a plan in his own head for pursuing his iniquitous scheme; and as he was not deficient in skill and cunning, he sagaciously determined to secure the approbation of the old folks on his side, ere he undertook his greater exploit. The truth is, that Mrs. Goold Woodby, impelled by Lady Thomson, had determined not to visit the Allnutts in London; for her object in life was to raise herself by endeavouring to associate with the rich and great; and what had she to gain, beyond the vulgar enjoyment of doing a kind act, by continuing her intimacy with them? She arrived from the country full of the most extensive schemes of 'cutting a figure,' and brought Lady Thomson with her as her dry-nurse. Lady Thomson planned her luxuries, and chose the fashion of her liveries, introduced her to the fashionable tradesmen, and threw her into the arms of extravagant milliners. She moreover supplied her with visiting lists, and never lost an opportunity of making obligations a marketable commodity, turning the civilities conferred upon her friend to her own benefit. She was ingenuity personified in executing any act of baseness, in order to se-

cure the notice of the great; and was equally full of talent in avoiding those whom it was inconvenient to know. But her scheme of 'cutting' the Allnutts became abortive, owing to the too powerful influence of the arrogant and petulant Tom, who, in spite of the stinginess and surliness of his father, and the ambitious views of his mother, had acquired a sway in the family which nothing could withstand. Lady Thomson herself was obliged to lower her diminished head; and bully Tom, as he was occasionally called, had it all his own way.

END OF VOL I.



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